

ADELAIDE DE NARBONNE,

WITH MEMOIRS OF
CHARLOTTE DE CORDET.

A TALE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
HENRY OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

“ My country ! It is not a single spot
“ Of such a mould, or fix’d to such a clime ;
“ No, ’tis the social circle of my friends,
“ The lov’d community in which I’m link’d,
“ And in whose welfare all my wishes centre.”

ROWE.

.....
“ Regretter ce ceux qu’on aime, est un bien, en comparaison de
“ vivre avec ce qu’on hait.”

ROCHEFAUCAULT.

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1800.

ADDITIONAL DE NATIONALE

WITH MEMOIR OF

CHARLES DE COCOTTE

—

A TALE

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1800-1801

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE HISTORY OF THE



ROWE.

in the collection of the British Museum, and in the collection of the

RICHARDSON.

VOL. IV.

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1800.

ADELAIDE

DE

NARBONNE.

CHAP. I.

“ I learn
“ Now of my own experience, not by talk,
“ How counterfeit a coin they are who *friends*
“ Bear in their superscription.”

MILTON.

“THE continual agitation under which my mind latterly laboured, had already planted seeds of indisposition in a constitution never naturally very strong, and, for some time past, less so than ever.

VOL. IV.

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The increasing fermentation in my blood now brought the feverish complaint, that for long preyed on my spirits, to its climax ; and the delirium by which it was attended, proved so violent as to threaten the most serious consequences :—my intellects remained unsettled for a period sufficiently prolonged to render their recovery doubtful ; but I was happily unconscious of this circumstance ;—and the dreadful state of misery to which I was now reduced, prevented me from discovering the depth of it, till the first, and most dangerous paroxysms of the distemper had subsided.

“ On the crisis of the disorder taking a favourable turn, I found myself in private lodgings, where every thing presented an unknown aspect around me. I stretched out a feeble emaciated hand, and drawing the curtains of my bed farther aside, repeated a look of silent enquiry, without ascertaining the knowledge of any object conducive to the explanation my wandering eyes vainly sought to obtain. Vexed and disappointed by a scrutiny so ineffectual, I withdrew my hand from the curtain, and pressing it on my forehead, endeavoured to arrange my scattered ideas, and render the transient images of the past, which continued to float through a yet partially bewildered brain, more stationary ; the undertaking, however, proved difficult, for the discriminating faculties were but slowly emerging from their recent state of confusion.

“ A woman,

“ A woman, whom in the calmer intervals of the distemper I retained some faint recollection of having seen, now entered the chamber, and softly approaching, stood in a bending posture, intently gazing upon me. I remarked her not at first; but upon doing so, instantly raised my head from the pillow, and demanded an explanation of what I saw.—An expression of pleasure and surprise took possession of her countenance; she returned no answer, however, but immediately stepping back, beckoned to another person who remained at a distance behind her, and then retired from the room.

“ The substitute with whom she had left me, now took her place at the bed-side, and was soon recognized for the elder of my two visitors in the gloomy prison of La Force;—those men who had delivered me from one species of bondage at least, but from whose own individual power it appeared I was not to be so quickly liberated.—He spoke to me, nevertheless, in terms of the most soothing gentleness and compassion; kindly congratulated me on the happy change (as he called it) which had now occurred in my situation; and repeatedly assured me of every protection his ability could afford;—averring, at the same time, that the hands into which I was fallen, would treat me with becoming respect, and attention. His words and
B 2 looks

looks were equally pleasing ;—and, after some further conversation, (having prohibited me from speaking any longer, in consideration of the weak state to which I was reduced), he bade me adieu for the present, and softly left the room.

“ During this interview, his former companion was not even mentioned ; nor had I hitherto almost retained a single trace of his existence.—So little did I then dream of the power thus surreptitiously obtained over me !

“ On the return of my female attendant, I could not refrain from questioning her concerning the name and condition of those under whose roof I was now placed, and to whose benevolent, though perhaps ill-judged exertions, I owed the present prolongation of my unfortunate life ?—She told me that I had fallen into the most humane hands ; that the person who had just quitted the chamber, was * M. Clemence ; he whose compassionate heart snatched a poor Swiss from impending destruction on the fatal 10th of August, and preserved his life at the imminent hazard of his own ; and afterwards, on presenting him to the National Assembly, had received marks of the most honourable approbation for a conduct so truly praiseworthy.

* Vide Moore's Journal.

‘And was it this same foldier,’ I enquired, ‘who lately accompanied your master to the prison of La Force?’

‘I know not *certainly*,’ replied the girl, ‘though I rather think not.—I believe it was a nephew of M. Clemence’s; his name is De la Ville;—a sad idle young man, Madame; but he has contrived to impose upon my good master, who entertains a better opinion of him, I fear, than he deserves.’

“This discourse would probably have lasted much longer, had I felt disposed to encourage it; but considering any further intelligence on the subject as immaterial, and one in which I supposed myself little interested, I dismissed my informer on feeling an inclination to sleep;—and soon after enjoyed a longer and more tranquil degree of repose, than I had latterly experienced for some time.

“The crisis of my disorder was now past, attended with symptoms of the most favourable nature; and, though slow in its progress, my probable recovery seemed visibly on the advance, when the person who had assumed the character of my husband in the prison of La Force, one evening entered my chamber.—He addressed me with easy *degagée* air; apologized for his absence, which business at some distance from Paris, he said, had prolonged beyond his wishes; and then

B 3

proceeded,

proceeded, in a familiar manner, to enquire into the state of my health.

“ The presuming pertness of his looks and language disgusted me ; I therefore abruptly interrupted him with, perhaps, too much hauteur ; and with an air of dignity, calculated to repress the practical equality he seemed evidently inclined to treat me with, spoke of the obligations I was under for the aid afforded me in the dungeon, and expressed regret that indisposition had hitherto deprived me of ability to fulfil the promise then given, of making a pecuniary return in some measure adequate to the favour at that period conferred upon me by him and his worthy uncle ; and concluded by assuring him, I should always retain a proper sense of the service they had so critically rendered me.

‘ We will speak on this topic more fully hereafter,’ said he ; ‘ in the meantime, I wish to learn when you think your strength will admit of a removal ; and whether or not it will soon be equal to the fatigue of a journey to Narbonne ?’---To this enquiry I answered, ‘ that if a farther residence in my present abode was inconvenient to M. Clemence, I certainly would endeavour to accelerate my departure with all possible dispatch :—otherwise, however, it was a matter of little importance, as the pecuniary engagement I had come under, should,

should, on no account, be longer unfulfilled, than till a messenger could reach Narbonne, and return to Paris.'

"I was proceeding, but he interrupted me in a manner I did not much like, by repeating the former enquiry respecting my ability to travel; 'Because,' added he, with a consequential motion of his head, 'particular business, connected with the welfare of the Republic, renders it necessary to undertake the journey immediately; and therefore the sooner *we* commence it, the better.'

"I started at the word '*we*,' and the style in which he expressed himself;—it seemed decisive and authoritative. I looked astonishment, and for a moment remained silent.—I suppose he read my thoughts; for, alas! my dear Charlotte, a humiliating explanation speedily followed, which sufficiently unravelled the horrid mystery.—According to the decree of the Committee of Safety, my marriage was henceforth to be considered as legally binding, if the observance of it was insisted upon by *either* of the contracting parties; and the latitude allowed by this article, was to be put in force against me, in spite of the fallacious (as it now appeared) promises, which had been given for the purpose of imposing upon my credulity.

“ Not more dishonourable than cautious in his proceedings, however, he had stole off privately to Narbonne, with a view to ascertain my intrinsic value before he took his final measures. The investigation turned out beyond his most sanguine expectations, and my fate was determined before his return to the capital!—So splendid a prize was considered as a princely indemnification for the stings of remorse, the reproaches of M. Clemence, or the misery it might entail on its unhappy victim.—Most unfortunately for me, his worthy uncle was at this period absent, attending a dying sister, at some distance from the metropolis, whose husband had been massacred in one of the late commotions. His unprincipled nephew considered this circumstance as too favourable to be neglected; and consequently seized the opportunity it afforded, to put the scheme he meditated in practice.

“ Early on the following morning I was, therefore, given to understand that neither my inclination nor my health would longer be admitted as sufficient reasons for retarding the commencement of this meditated journey.—In consequence of this intimation, I used every argument in my power to procure a short respite. I even descended to entreaty!—Good heavens! to what have I been reduced!—and for what?—To avoid returning to Narbonne! that spot, where all that was once dear

to

to me on earth, lay entombed!—Alas! it was not the place I wished to fly, but the company of a wretch, whose very presence appeared an insult to the ashes of the dead; and from associating with whom, my soul revolted with instinctive and unconquerable horror.—Could his project have been delayed till the return of M. Clemence, I flattered myself the authority of that worthy man might have been exerted in my behalf; and that, under protection so respectable, the power assumed by his vile relative, would have proved abortive.

“ But De la Ville was too sensible of these circumstances himself, and too well acquainted with the motives for procrastination on my side, to be influenced by tears, arguments, threats, or entreaty. He had laid his plans purposely to avoid the very incident for which I used them; and could not, of course, be expected to adopt a line of conduct diametrically opposite to every reasonable prospect of success, and decidedly inimical to the natural mean, selfish, unfeeling bent of his disposition. To this catalogue of enumerated *virtues*, I might likewise add the word ‘despotic;’ for in common with those possessed of much vanity and weak intellect, he evinces the strongest propensity to tyrannize on every possible occasion, where his personal safety is not endangered by the attempt;—instances of which must frequently have fallen under your

own observation, since the first commencement of our acquaintance.

“I will not pain your friendly heart, my dear Charlotte, by dwelling on the sufferings to which I was subjected, or the acute degree of misery that wrung every agonized feeling during the dreadful course of this fatal night!—I continued in a succession of fainting fits through a considerable part of it; but even the situation to which these reduced me, had not sufficient influence to soften the mind of my inhuman oppressor.—On the following morning, before daybreak, I was forced from my chamber, more dead than alive, and placed in a close carriage that waited in the street to receive me:—during this transaction, the wretch repeatedly swore I should be driven to the lodgings of Marat, (who was determined, he said, to put his former threats of vengeance in execution, for the disappointment experienced on my account), if I longer presumed to struggle against the *legal* authority he pretended to be invested with.—Alas! I was now become unable to struggle with any thing!—exhausted by mental and bodily exertion, no friendly arm near to be lifted in my defence, and convinced the lot that had fallen upon me was irremediable, I ceased to remonstrate or complain, on condition of being permitted to remain at the Convent of Narbonne, till my health and spirits
were

were in some degree re-established;—an event, however, which I nevertheless secretly and fervently prayed, might never happen; a speedy passage to the peaceful grave being then the ultimatum of my wishes.

“ He seemed, in some measure, gratified by the calm and apparently composed manner in which this request was preferred, so different from the general style of my late behaviour. But, ever superficial or wicked, the wretched De la Ville had not penetration to discover that the symptoms of acquiescence, on which he congratulated himself as the effect of superior management, merely proceeded from mental debility, indisposition, and fatigue—consequences certainly of the foregoing treatment I had experienced, but of a description very foreign from those he chose to assign for them. The mistake, notwithstanding, answered the same purpose:—he was eager to have it believed that inclination on my side, not compulsion, had obtained my hand; vanity instigated this idea, and he cherished it as favourable to the inflated notion entertained of his individual importance, which had influence to procure him a matrimonial establishment so splendid and enviable. He therefore condescended to grant my petition, provided the term of my residence with the sisterhood was not unnecessarily protracted, or any sinister methods

taken for eluding his knowledge, disputing his authority, or endeavouring to controvert the right he possessed of determining my future destiny:—‘In all which cases I should not only,’ he said, ‘feel the effects of his resentment in my own person, but draw them also on the seminary and its inhabitants, with every aggravated horror the National Assembly could assist him to inflict.’

“ I trembled at the picture thus presented to my contemplation ; but disdaining to hold any further conversation with so contemptible, so unprincipled a being, I leant my aching forehead against the side of the carriage, and maintained a profound silence during the remainder of the journey.

“ In the sympathizing bosom of my worthy friend, the Abbess, I poured forth my griefs ; and received in return, the best and most consolatory advice for mitigating the agonizing sensations I was daily condemned to suffer.

“ From her I learned, soon after my arrival, that Victorine, accompanied by Madame de Mercour, had reached the rock in safety ; but that, alarmed at my protracted absence, the latter at length left Narbonne, and risked every thing by returning to the metropolis, in order to try all possible means for ascertaining the nature of my destiny, and the cause that prevented me from joining them in their retreat.

“ The result of this unfortunate enquiry must have been attended with the most fatal consequences to that inestimable woman, of whom I have never been able to discover the smallest remaining trace :—no doubt she has long ago fallen a sacrifice to her affectionate, but ill-fated anxiety for me !—for me, the bane of her family, who had formerly cost it so dear !

“ This cruel circumstance was an additional aggravation to my other sorrows, and fell with accumulated force on the wretched head, already bowed to the earth with so many strokes of unparalleled affliction.—In the unsuccessful enquiries I found means to make, respecting her final destiny, fresh causes for regret continually occurred ; but not one alleviating incident transpired to sooth my tortured mind on this most distressing event.—Over the uncertain fate of my beloved Magdeleine, I have shed many a tributary, but ineffectual tear. The Lady Abbess, though acquainted with her worth, and connected by ties of consanguinity with the family of St. Cyprian, bore the dreadful calamity with superior magnanimity and composure. Detached from the world, and the world’s inhabitants, even in a greater degree than myself, she considered similar deprivations as merely temporary ; and, with the true spirit of Christian resignation, looked forward to a happier and more lasting union

union with those formerly dear to her, in a future state, where human crimes could not separate, nor misfortune lacerate the hearts of the virtuous and the good.

“ The variety of distress I had recently undergone, and the short period in which it had all taken place, seemed, on reflection, so totally incredible, that there were moments in which I almost fancied the whole was only some fearful vision of a disordered imagination, originating in those effects derived from the mental derangement with which I had once been afflicted. This transient idea, horrible as it would have appeared to the generality of mankind, was always welcomed by me as affording a respite from more painful recollections.— How dreadful, my dear girl, must have been the condition of that mind, which extracted its principal consolation from the very circumstance that undeviatingly fills the human breast with the most terrific images, whether viewed as *the malady of another*, or (in lucid intervals) remembered as *our own* !—Alas ! melancholy as such a comforter must appear, I was seldom long permitted to enjoy its influence ; and I experienced, to my cost, that there existed evils, to which, comparatively speaking, insanity itself was a blessing !

“ So thinking, and so situated, it is not to be wondered at if my health *once more* fell a sacrifice
to

to the nature of the lot assigned me. The early bias of my constitution to consumptive complaints, now became strengthened by the additional aid of mental distress; for the mind and the body are too nearly connected not to be mutually injured, or benefited, from the same cause that particularly affects either of them. The slow, but increasing symptoms of decay have long been unproblematical; and, I trust, will, in proper time, administer the only radical cure my wounds now admit of receiving!

CHAP. II.

- “ Her port was more than human ; as I stood,
“ I took it for a fairy vision
“ Of some gay creature of the element,
“ That in the colours of the rainbow lives,
“ And plays i'th' plighted clouds.”

MILTON'S COMUS.

“ **W**HEN the feverish complaint, with which I was affected on my arrival at the Convent, had somewhat abated of its first violence, I became so urgent to visit the inhabitant of the rock, that the Abbess at length agreed to accompany me thither, though it was not without a considerable degree of difficulty that I obtained this indulgence ; for her friendly anxiety on my account was so great, that she

she watched, with extreme solicitude, every change in my varying countenance, and scarcely ever left my apartment, unless to attend the incumbent duties immediately attached to her superior situation in the Convent.

“Hitherto, during the whole period of Victorine’s confinement, I knew she had lost no necessary attendance by the circumstance of my unavoidable absence.—Margaretta had been appointed to the confidential office of waiting upon those, whose safety required a temporary concealment in that place; and in this employment her daughter Agnes, who was a lay-sister in the Convent, frequently assisted.—My poor friend, Madame de Mercour, in conjunction with the Lady Abbess, had arranged the whole affair, and put the youthful prisoner’s establishment on a comfortable footing before she returned to Paris on her ill-fated enquiry after my untoward fate.—The Abbess readily undertook the trouble of superintending the inferior agents, and directing the requisite conduct of the business, till such time as I relieved her from the task, by once more returning to the seat of my ancestors, and resuming my former occupations, together with the additional one which had now occurred.

“In the course of this employment, that lady had often occasionally spent an hour or two with
Victorine,

Victorine, with whose amiable qualities and beautiful figure she seemed much captivated, and mentioned the lovely girl, prior to our meeting, in terms that increased the interest she already possessed in my heart, and which she appeared entitled to claim, as the last legacy left me by the sister of my ever-lamented St. Hypolite—a legacy, the preservation of which had been attended with consequences so fatal to my tranquillity in this world, and, in all human probability, of no less serious import to the life (or liberty at least) of the dear and incomparable friend, whose fate remains enveloped in the darkest and most impenetrable mystery.

“ Become entirely indifferent myself to the prolongation of an existence, that in the state to which I was degraded, and with the feelings which I possessed, appeared only in the light of lengthened misery ; I should have paid little attention to the necessary precautions requisite for guarding against the damps to be encountered in our progress through a secret passage, which led to the vicinity of the rock, in the direction we meant to follow, as the least liable to the danger of observation ; for De la Ville’s commands, not to quit the Convent on any account whatever, without the previous sanction of his approbation, were too severely enforced by the denounced vengeance that was to punish

punish their infringement, to render me callous on a subject, where the well-being and, perhaps, even the life of my only surviving friends would be sacrificed to the ill-judged indulgence of my wishes, not to render concealment a matter of the first importance.—On this circumstance my principal care was particularly fixed ; and I should have bestowed very little thought (as I have already said) on the injury my own health might possibly receive, in the course of a walk so likely to affect it in a prejudicial manner, had not the Abbess made a point of supplying every deficiency of mine on the occasion, with that tender and almost parental attention which I had so frequently experienced from her steady and benevolent disposition.

“ Thus fortified against the apprehended attacks of subterranean damps, or the chill air of the evening, and supported by the united aid of Margareta, her daughter Agnes, and the Lady Abbess, who led the way, I proceeded with slow, trembling, and feeble steps, to the well-known spot, which had formerly witnessed scenes of the most exquisite happiness, and afterwards exhibited others replete with every extreme of misery capable of wringing the human heart!—Ah no ! let me recal these decisive words !—The degrading state of humiliation, since fallen to my lot, was then unknown !—consequently, however wretched, I was still
respectable

respectable in my own eyes.—That consolatory conviction is no longer mine ! and, therefore, till the event of my fatal journey to the metropolis, I was unacquainted with the dreadful extent of terrestrial anguish which the devoted inhabitants of the world are liable to suffer, even without the additional anguish of having consciously merited it by any premeditated error of their own committing !”

Here the Countess paused, and Charlotte seized the opportunity to use those arguments she knew were best calculated to sooth and console the agitated mind of her unhappy companion. Her words, ever fraught with peace and comfort, were seldom listened to in vain ;—for strength of reasoning, and the powers of mild persuasion, she was eminently distinguished ; and Madame de Narbonne now, as usual, experienced their beneficial influence to the extent of her wishes : she, therefore, was soon enabled to conclude what remained of her narrative, without any further interruptions.

“ If interested in the safety and happiness of Victorine, merely from the adventitious circumstances which had occurred to recommend her to my notice, that interest was considerably strengthened by the personal knowledge now acquired of her amiable and attractive character. I had frequently heard Madame de Mercour mention her with the fond partiality of a parent ; but I ascribed
much

much to the warm and affectionate disposition of that dear friend, and therefore expected not to see the original equally incomparable with the picture she delighted to draw of her young and lovely favourite, with whom she had long ardently wished me acquainted:—but as I then never left Narbonne, and the Queen would not permit her to be any length of time absent from her presence, no opportunity, of course, offered for the commencement of such a design during the period of Magdeleine's connection with her, till the fatal moment when its termination verged to a close, and misfortune, or the grave, yawned to separate them for ever.

“ Judge, then, of my astonishment on finding a combination of every thing that could charm in woman-kind, united alike in the mind, form, and features of my *protégée* !—But I will not anticipate your future observations on so interesting a subject:—you shall speedily be enabled to determine for yourself; and, I doubt not, will then coincide with me in the opinion I have given of a character so uncommonly attractive.—A few words more will now bring my long, melancholy, and, as I fear you have often thought it, fatiguing narrative to a conclusion.—I will afterwards introduce you to her, who may possibly have occasion to depend on your friendly offices, when the head
of

of the wretched being who now addresses you, is deposited in the dust ! and the throbbing heart that bespeaks your future protection for the hapless orphan, shall no more be condemned to groan under the iron hand of adversity, or shudder at the frown of the oppressor !

“ As my health had not received any material injury by the first visit paid to the rock, the Abbess no longer opposed the growing inclination I daily felt to be with Victorine, and every hour I spent in her solitary residence, increased the progress she had early made in my affections ; so that at length I almost considered her as a child of my own, and may truly venture to affirm, that I could not possibly be more solicitous for her safety and welfare, had she indeed possessed a claim to that degree of consanguinity.

“ The Abbess, scarcely less prejudiced in her favour, has kindly permitted Agnes to pay almost uninterrupted attendance in the recess.

“ Since my return to the Castle, though I contrive to see her once at least, if not oftener, in the course of every four-and-twenty hours ; yet, for obvious reasons, I am forced to observe the strictest circumspection on the occasion, and to proceed with all possible precaution : as the most trifling incident, tending to produce a discovery, would infallibly be fol-

lowed with incalculable mischief to every individual hitherto concerned in her concealment.

“ That such a person still exists, however, seems to be pretty generally believed, if we may credit the intelligence received by Mr. Hastings on that topic. The emotion I betrayed on that communication, no doubt, surprised you ; I was, indeed, dreadfully agitated by his information, which, while it convinced me that the life and rank of Victorine were no longer problematical, left the mind totally in the dark, how far the knowledge of her real situation had transpired :—and this painful uncertainty leads to the most distressing apprehensions for her safety ; since it is but too evident that, however she might be supported by one party, to forward their own secret views of future advantage, still the majority of the nation must be expected to unite against the success of a scheme, so truly Utopian in its principles, so totally devoid of the smallest plausibility, and alone calculated, by the very nature of its aspect, to prove the destruction of her whom it pretends to exalt, and finally involve all concerned in it in one universal ruin. But towering ambition is apt to overleap the boundary of sober reflection ; by which means, it frequently defeats the purposes of an inflated imagination, and, while, with the poet’s eye, it ‘ glances from earth to heaven,’ is sometimes precipitated,

cipitated, like a falling star, from the aspiring but visionary altitude of ideal pre-eminence, till it literally sets to rise no more !

“ Alas ! such must soon be the fate of my poor Victorine, if dragged from her peaceful retirement, for the ostensible design of seating her on a blood-stained throne, to the possession of which she cannot prefer the smallest claim in justification of so wild an attempt ; and from the summit of which the first who mounts it, be their pretensions ever so legitimate, will too probably be hurled by the reeking poniard of the dark assassin, or the more open, though not less decisive fiat of an opposing but victorious faction.

“ But, independent of these considerations, I am too well acquainted with the character of Victorine, not to know that her mind and principles would equally revolt from a proposition so inimical to the interest and rights of her aunt’s children ; and am, therefore, certain she would almost submit to any individual suffering, even the deprivation of life itself, rather than grant her consent to usurp the place of another, or agree to injure the son of her benefactress by pursuing a mode of conduct so glaringly reprehensible.

“ Thus, every way must such an attempt be fraught with mischief of the blackest die, to this unoffending and guiltless girl, if the idea suggested
in

in Mr. Hastings's dispatches originates in any point more stationary than the mere fabrication of party, or the temporary exclamations of a tumultuous and ever fluctuating multitude: from all these reflections, the result of the sum total appears to consist in the most persevering attention to secrecy and concealment, from the religious observance of which circumstances, can *alone* be derived any reasonable expectation of her ultimate preservation. Meanwhile she has books and musical instruments at command, with every other source of amusement or convenience that could possibly be procured for her accommodation. But even these, from the nature of her situation, cannot be supposed of a very extensive description; however, she endeavours to reconcile herself to the appointments of Heaven, without indulging a repining spirit, or uttering ineffectual complaints against the hardships of a destiny which she knows is at present unavoidable.

“ But to return. You are, no doubt, surprised that I ever again consented to enter the Castle, where the treacherous De la Ville reigned unmolested.—*I did not consent!* necessity and superior force have no laws, and these obliged me to a reluctant compliance.—The whim seized him, in time, that *my* presence was wanting to complete *his* triumph. The public avowal of an union with

the *Countess de Narbonne*, who was known in the neighbourhood to have formerly rejected so many advantageous offers, both in respect to riches and rank, was a piece of vanity not to be suppressed; and to the *consequence* attached to a name so illustrious for innumerable generations, am I probably indebted for the permission which has hitherto enabled me to retain it.—Madame de la Ville might be of plebeian extraction, a portionless woman of yesterday, equally unknown as her husband by such an appellation; but Madame de Narbonne, the only surviving descendant of a noble family, and the heiress of immense wealth, conferred a degree of importance on all connected with her, and could not fail of rendering the fortunate master of her destiny a conspicuous and distinguished character;—so, I have reason to believe, argued the equalizing Citizen De la Ville! but theory and practice are not always the same thing in the new republican creed of our *soi-disant* Reformers.

“ In conformity with the ostentatious measure he had chosen to adopt, I was, as I have already said, necessitated to quit the Convent, and once more become a melancholy inmate under the now polluted roof of my ancestors; no longer the peaceful retirement I had left on departing for Paris, but the noisy receptacle of inebriety, the haunt of vice, anarchy, and every species of disorder.

“ Scenes

“ Scenes so new and detestable, he was convinced, must be equally repugnant and uncongenial to my principles ; but it was early discovered I was not of a temper to complain, where complaint would prove ineffectual ; and he therefore trusted to my prudence, or perhaps I should rather say, indifference, not to provoke his resentment by evincing any marked opposition to the pleasure of my oppressor :—what other motives governed his conduct, I know not.—In thus tearing me from the Convent, however, I received another sad proof of the despotism which had appeared in the treatment I experienced previous to our quitting the metropolis ; and from these two instances, was reminded by the barbarous wretch of what was hereafter to be expected on similar occasions.

“ My reluctance to depart was, nevertheless, at first so unconquerable, that threats of immediate destruction, if I persisted in a refusal, were denounced against the whole community ; whereas specious promises of patronage and protection were to be the consequence of a ready compliance, provided I engaged to conduct myself, in future, with a proper regard to common decency on every public occurrence where *his* dignity, or the duty I was presumed to owe him, required it.

“ I could not be expected to place much confidence in the verbal promises of a man who, in the

most important circumstance of my life, had already broken through engagements of a description too solemn to be jested with ; and by so doing, grossly outraged every principle of truth and moral rectitude. But my spirit was now literally bowed to the ground ; and convinced that every prospect of happiness on my own account, was for ever at an end, I wished, in the resignation of personal considerations, to evince my promptitude for the promotion of that of others. The Nuns, appalled by De la Ville's threats of impending vengeance, besought me, with tears in their eyes, and the most moving entreaties, to comply. In consequence of the resolution I had formed, their request was acceded to, and the present apprehensions of the Sisterhood removed at the expence of my own feelings : but the obligations I was under to the Abbess, persuaded me that I owed her, and the community over which she presided, this sacrifice ; and with a bleeding heart, but unrepining tongue, it was accordingly made.

“ Since that distressing period, my dear Charlotte, no particular event of any moment has hitherto interrupted the uniform and melancholy tenor of my days ; bad treatment, or total neglect, have alternately been my portion !—To the former I am now become nearly callous, and the latter is ever welcomed as the peculiar boon of Heaven !—Time, it is true, moves heavily along ; but though
flow

slow in its progress, it brings a cure in its train, that will finally heal all my sorrows—‘a consummation by me devoutly to be wished!’

“ Before I conclude this narrative, I must not forget to mention that the infamous Marat was not long in tracing my steps. In consequence of his disappointment, he breathed nothing but vengeance; but Marat is ever attentive to personal safety, and wished not to risk it on my account: besides, his own situation in the National Assembly has long been in so precarious a state, as to leave him little time for other considerations.—In spite of the support derived from Danton and his party, the friends and political connections of De la Ville are too numerous to venture on any open mode of revenge under existing circumstances; of course I had almost begun to flatter myself with total oblivion on his side, when the late contracted intimacy with Austin, his visits at the Castle, and the affair of Jacqueline on the day of the *fête*, again revived a thousand apprehensions, accompanied by innumerable surmises, the nature of which I have vainly endeavoured to develop.

“ Upon the whole, however, I am fully convinced that reasons very different from idle curiosity, or the ostensible pretence of friendship to the self-made master of Narbonne, have produced the

circumstances of which I now speak. Indeed I am persuaded that the conduct to which I allude, originates merely in a desire to watch the motions of De la Ville, whose inherent vanity, mental weakness, and neighbourhood to the Royalists, might perhaps lay him open to the lash of censure, and thereby furnish a ready excuse for his ultimate ruin.

“ As every piece of intelligence has a true and false side, and the latter usually gains more extensive credit than the former, from the greater bulk of mankind being more vicious than virtuous, De la Ville’s account of his marriage was almost implicitly believed, and the easier, as I felt an insurmountable repugnance to enter on a subject, from the bare remembrance of which my soul recoiled with inexpressible horror. Shunned, therefore, by the remaining Noblesse in the vicinity (when the Castle was at length open for the reception of visitors), as a mean deserter of my birthright—a disgrace to the rank I had formerly held in life; and despising, in my turn, the contemptible associates of him who called himself my husband, I seemed to be an isolated being, broken off from the link of that invisible chain which connects man with his fellow-man, and binds happier mortals in the philanthropic ties of common interest, and the reciprocity of mutual affection!

“ Such,

“ Such, my dear Charlotte, was nearly my situation when the worthy M. de Clermont came to settle in this part of the country, and by that means procured me the consolation of your acquaintance, which has latterly proved the principal solace of my life. To you I have now related the misfortunes which have long overwhelmed my devoted head, though hitherto buried in uncomplaining silence. You will henceforth cease to wonder at my declining health and broken spirits, or feel surprised at the many lonely hours apparently spent in a melancholy seclusion, remote from all manner of society. You now know, however, that a considerable part of that time is appropriated to the solitary retreat of my poor Victorine, with whom I mean you shall speedily be acquainted. Though I flatter myself there is little foundation for the rumour which reached Mr. Hastings, yet so far I own it is unpleasant, as it conveys a certain proof that her existence is still supposed, and consequently may give rise to investigations, which, in the present situation of affairs, would by no means be either desirable or convenient. I wish to Heaven she were only safe under the protection of England or the Court of Vienna!—I sometimes think these Englishmen might render us essential service, were such an emergency to happen, as required their assistance;

they appear to be men of honour and determined courage.—M. de Clermont too!—but I fear to involve him in disagreeable difficulties, and therefore dare not be so explicit in that quarter as I wish. There are people, I know, who already regard his motions with a jealous eye:—God forbid that any imprudence of mine should ascertain their suspicions of so worthy a character!—Perhaps—but we will not be rash!—If succeeding circumstances require more vigorous measures, we can then have recourse to them, otherwise they must not be thought of. Let us, therefore, wait till we see the probable result of the Chevalier Charette's late victory, and if any further rumours are propagated relative to the future destination of Victorine.—Meanwhile we will now return to the Castle:—it is too late at present to introduce you to the youthful recluse; to-morrow my promise shall be performed on that subject, when we will once more canvass these important matters over again.”

At this moment soft and melodious strains of music again arose from the interior of the rock, and Charlotte immediately recollected the same notes that had formerly attracted her notice, and appeared so inexplicable.

“ Ah!” exclaimed she, turning hastily round in a listening posture, “ it is this Victorine then, who

who was the invisible musician that so divinely fascinated my attention!—Hark! what celestial sounds! I could hear them for ever!”

The evening hymn to the Virgin succeeded, and gradually died away as it thrilled on their ears, while they wound round the bottom of the rock, and pursued their way back to the Castle. During their walk, Charlotte learned that the mysterious circumstance, which had formerly occurred respecting the Abbess and Sister Agnes, was merely in consequence of the secrecy necessary to be observed in their reciprocal visits to the rock.

Occupied through the following night in reflecting on the eventful history of her unhappy friend, sleep was sacrificed to the restless train of thought which harassed her mind; and at intervals she fancied herself sensible of a presentiment that another disclosure was yet to take place on the succeeding day at the recess.

What this disclosure was, and how far her prognostication happened to be verified, may probably be seen in the subsequent pages, should the reader think them not totally unworthy of his further attention.

CHAP. III.

“ In this impending scene of public horror
“ Be then, dear maid ! these mansions thy asylum :
“ I’ll be thy hostage now, and with my life
“ Will answer that no mischief shall befall thee :
“ I know not why, but thou art precious to me.”

MILLER.

WHEN Madame de Narbonne awoke on the following morning, the beneficial effects derived from her recent communications to Charlotte were already become visible on her still pensive but less languid countenance. The renovating influence of balmy sleep, undisturbed by those mental terrors to which it had long proved subjected, had now been

been enjoyed in a manner very different from that in which she usually passed the hours particularly allotted to repose.—She was conscious of feeling uncommonly refreshed by this circumstance: her mind too seemed more at ease since it was disburdened of the heavy load which latterly oppressed it, when secret and corroding grief preyed upon its energies, unalleviated by the soothing voice of sympathy, or the tender participation of a faithful and sensible friend.

The lengthened absence of De la Ville, with the total silence which prevailed respecting the cause of it, gave room to imagine that his fate was finally decided in this world; and consequently his follies, his vices, his weakness, and tyranny equally at an end for ever!—Prepossessed with this consolatory idea, several worthy people who, during the reign of terrorism, had fled from the capital, and taken up their residence in the neighbourhood of Narbonne, now ventured to appear at the Castle.

Of these the principal number consisted of females; who, trembling at the deadly and vindictive nature of Robespierre and Marat, yet unwilling to have their property confiscated under the stale pretence of emigration, were solicitous to avoid that imputation by remaining within the territories of the Republic, though removed to some distance

from those wretches, whose most merciful actions were at best a disgrace to insulted humanity.

Amongst those who thus occasionally assembled under the roof of her ancestors, Madame de Narbonne accidentally discovered some relatives of the House of St. Cyprian, and she felt herself drawn by an irresistible impulse to see them. The forenoon was, therefore, partly spent in their company, without evincing any particular reluctance to the presence of others, with whom, at the same time, she was under the necessity of associating.

Charlotte perceived this alteration in the conduct of her friend with secret satisfaction; and justly ascribing it to the relief her mind had experienced by the recent disclosure, her benevolent heart overflowed with pleasure at a circumstance which exhibited so convincing a proof of her importance to the tranquillity of that amiable but unfortunate woman.—It is true, the Countess frequently appeared absorbed in thought, and at intervals totally absent to every external consideration; but this was not to be wondered at, and Mademoiselle de Cordet therefore wisely congratulated herself on the extent of that favourable change which had already come within the pale of her observation, without repining that its magnitude was not greater.

Though

Though Madame de Clermont detested rational conversation, and what she styled the fatiguing uniformity of Madame de Narbonne's manners, yet seclusion from society, of whatever description, was, in her opinion, the worst of human evils, and even surpassed the life of *ennui* she sometimes led at Narbonne. Such, however, had lately been her portion.—M. de Clermont was at the Castle; part of his family accompanied him; and though she had positively declined making one of the number, in expectation of reigning paramount over prostrate lovers during the absence of a troublesome husband, whose officious remonstrances were continually poured forth on the glaring impropriety of her conduct; her triumphs were, nevertheless, visionary, and every high-raised sensation of hope rendered abortive, by the non-appearance of those enviable mortals, on whom she purposed exercising the influence, *in toto*, of charms to whose superlative pre-eminence so much importance was annexed in the mind of their possessor.

This defalcation in the annals of gallantry was not imputable to any arrangement of the lady's, but produced by an unfortunate combination of circumstances, unnecessary to be particularized at present, unless we mention the presumption that a principal attraction to such visitors was at this juncture

ture removed elsewhere, in the persons of her young and beautiful daughters:—a supposition, however, which it is well known their mother would by no means admit amongst her usual calculation of probabilities; for, as we have formerly observed, Madame de Clermont was resolved to “*live all the days of her life,*” and had a peculiar aversion to the line of comparison when employed in bringing “women of a certain age,” and the bloom of early youth in abhorred contrast with each other:—*Ergo*, Madame de Clermont still continued to retain no very violent predilection for the rivalry of “young and beautiful daughters,” and therefore assigned the disappointment of her expectations to every other earthly cause except the real one.

Be that as it may, she soon became heartily weary of keeping the field of action without an opponent, and even preferred the prosing insipidity of a journey to Narbonne, where the ridiculous strictures of an unreasonable husband perpetually sounding in the ears of a blameless wife, and the stupid indifference to every innocent amusement so remarkable in the Countess, no doubt formed a concatenation of repelling objections, which nothing could have surmounted, short of her dislike to the dullest of all society, that of her own
vacant,

vacant, uncultivated mind; from a solitary dependence on which for any portion of sensible entertainment, she turned with every symptom of well-founded disgust, and by so doing, evinced that she possessed no small degree of penetration on *one* subject at least.

In conformity with the foregoing mode of reasoning, Madame took the resolution of repairing to Narbonne, where it was now rumoured people of all descriptions occasionally appeared. Amidst such a motley crowd it would be hard indeed, she imagined, if M. de Clermont's attention was not to be directed to other objects, and the general tenor of her conduct, by that means, left to her own management. Elated with the ideal possibility of outwitting this Argus-eyed husband, and the consequent freedom of pursuing the natural bent of her disposition, Madame de Clermont arrived at the Castle in high spirits, just as the family were assembling to dinner in the *salle à manger*.

Anxious rather to conciliate, by the suavity of his manners, than meet the most distant prospect of amendment with the frowning brow of austere reproach, M. de Clermont received his Lady without expressing the smallest surprise at an appearance so totally unexpected, or commenting in any degree whatever, on the usual instability of her determinations.

She herself did not seem to imagine it necessary to apologize for either. She glanced a scrutinizing look round the room, curtsied *en passant* to the company, swam with her accustomed air of consequence to the seat she had fixed upon, again surveyed the whole circle, then motioned with her fan for a gentleman of her acquaintance to approach, and place himself on a vacant chair at her side; and upon his flying to obey her, immediately commenced a half-whispered conversation with all the girlish gaiety of early youth, accompanied by that easy *degagée nonchalance*, and convenient indifference to foreign objects, for which many people of great rank and little politeness are so eminently conspicuous.

M. de Clermont was at this period speaking to a servant who came with a message from Madame de Narbonne, and consequently did not at first perceive how her attention was occupied. She now saw him advance up the room, and, hastily whispering something behind her fan to her companion, turned round on her chair, fixed herself in a more erect posture, and assuming a serious aspect, kept her eye on her husband's countenance till he reached her.—M. de Clermont then taking her hand, led her to the head of the dinner table; delivering, at the same time, a request from the Countess, that she would take her place, and act as
mistress

mistress of the Castle during the period she chose to make it her residence. To this complimentary message was added an apology for her own absence, assigning indisposition as the cause of it. She entreated Madame de Clermont would, therefore, excuse her attendance for the remainder of the day, but begged she might consider herself as perfectly at home, and act accordingly.

Gratified by this piece of attention, (which the Countess thought due to the uncle of Mademoiselle de Cordet, independent of his high rank, individual worth, or the increasing favourable opinion entertained of his character), Madame de Clermont placed the whole to her own account, fully convinced that so distinguished a mark of respect could only be intended for merit such as she conceived herself possessed of in a superlative degree; and of course became suddenly so delighted with the plenitude of power now conferred upon her, that pleasure danced in her eyes, and unusual good humour sat apparent on every feature. The absence of Madame de Narbonne was by no means considered as a cause for regret:—her substitute found herself perfectly competent to perform the part of representative, and modestly concluded, in her own mind, that the Countess had never before done any thing so reasonable or praiseworthy. She therefore exerted herself to promote hilarity and cheerfulness:

the

the tale, the song, the smart rapartee, resounded from every side of the table ; and a stranger, on entering the room, would scarcely have supposed that all the horrors of civil war were raging in a kingdom, the inhabitants of which exhibited such external proofs of light-hearted unconcern and thoughtless festivity. But Madame de Clermont was the officiating priestess, and scenes of rational amusement, or serious reflection, were not amongst the number of sacrifices offered on her altar.

Solicitous to reach the rock, and commence an acquaintance with its fair inhabitant, Charlotte early retired from the *salle à manger*, where the Countess had insisted upon her appearing with the other guests. On enquiry, however, she learned that Madame had seized the opportunity of repairing alone to the prison of the Royal captive, and left directions with Agathe, requesting her company at a more advanced period of the evening.

Anxious to avoid any further intercourse with the noisy party she had just quitted, Mademoiselle de Cordet struck into a thick grove of chestnuts, oriental planes, and sycamores. A volume of Thomson's Seasons was her only companion, which she had been able for some time to read with great facility in the original English ; in this study her proficiency proved indeed astonishing :—but Cupid is an universal teacher, and his votaries have always
been

been remarkable for a certain quickness of comprehension, unknown to the dull, stoical order of beings, who have never experienced the renovating influence of that all-powerful deity.

Intent upon the beauties of her favourite author, she heard not a rustling sound amongst the under-wood, till the cause of it was almost at her elbow; she hastily turned her head, and was immediately accosted by Montague. The dead author speedily gave way to his living countryman; Thomson served for a short introductory conversation, when a more interesting one soon succeeded, and the poet of nature ceased to form one of the *trio*.—But

“Joys are pains, because they cannot last.”

A sudden change took place in the appearance of the sky before they had been long together; the air became still and sultry, the clouds assumed a sullen dark hue, and every thing indicated an approaching tempest ready to burst over their heads. The thick interwoven foliage had hitherto concealed these threatening symptoms from observation; but the elementary strife was arrived at a crisis, and vivid lightning, darting in every direction, announced the tremendous crash that was preparing to follow. It came in “awful majesty arrayed!” The loud progressive sound advanced by

by solemn degrees, and at length broke in fearful claps over their path ; the report was echoed from the neighbouring rocks, and by reverberation seemed to roll from cliff to cliff, and return through every cave and valley, till it died away in almost imperceptible murmurs on the ear.

The instant it ceased, the rush of every waterfall was heard ; but the momentary calmness was interrupted by the returning echo on the hills behind, which burst forth again in the most terrific peals. Again all was silent, till, on the right, the more distant thunder rose on some other mountain, and seemed to take its course up every dell and creek, till at last the reverberation was heard on both sides at once, to the very extremity of the river.

During this awful scene, Thomson's description of a thunder storm occurred to the recollection of Mademoiselle de Cordet, and she grasped the arm of Montague closer at every returning flash of fire ; while he, sensible of the danger to which their present situation mutually exposed them, from the attractive nature of the surrounding foliage, hastened her trembling steps to the other side of the forest, eager to see her removed from the more immediate chance of some untoward event.

At length they emerged from the gloomy shade of the woods, and reached the vicinity of the rock ;
but

but on examining her watch, Charlotte perceived it was yet too early to join the Countess, and therefore proceeded in a different direction to the banks of the river:—not a breath of air was stirring, and its smooth surface presented a shining mirror, reflecting inverted mountains, rocks, groves, meads, and vales; in one place the Gothic form of the ancient Convent, with its towering spires and dark time-coloured turrets, glittered on the liquid expanse, and stretched their lengthened shadows to the opposite boundary. So transparent was the water, that the fish, sporting at the depth of several fathoms, could be clearly discerned.

Occupied for some time in contemplating these interesting appearances of nature, and no longer apprehensive of suffering from the effects of the electrical fire which had recently exhibited so alarming an aspect, the two friends gradually became unconscious there were other objects than themselves in the world, who possessed any claims upon their attention; but the slow-sounding clock, which sent its monotonous warning from the frowning steeple of the cloister, reminded Charlotte that the appointed period for attending the Countess approached, and awakened them from their dream of delight:—their attention, however, was occasionally attracted as they wound along the banks of the river, by the ever-varying reflection in the water,
where

where the deep green here was seen to blend with the olive and grey of adjacent objects, while the background declined in faintest purple, variegated with the deep crimson of an evening sky.

While they proceeded on their way, the clouds gradually became strongly tinged with the same colour, and the river glowed with a fine carnation. As the sun descended, the grey vapours, which hung on the hills, assumed a flame-like appearance, displaying many grotesque figures, while all below was sinking from the eye in solemn confusion *.

By this time they were within a few paces of the first gate that led to the rock ; Charlotte, therefore, expressed a wish to be left alone, and her companion bowing as he pressed her hand to his lips, after seeing her enter the gate, instantly retired.

The Countess, who had been watching her arrival from a window of the saloon, met her at the porch, and desiring her to follow, passed through the concealed door that led to the other apartments; at length, after tracing several dark and narrow windings in this natural structure, they ascended a small staircase cut in the rock, and again proceeding along something like a gallery, Madame de Narbonne opened a door near the further end of

* Hutchinson's Tour to the Lakes.

it, which was so nicely contrived, and looked so exactly similar to the solid stone, that no person, unacquainted with the secret of its existence, could possibly have suspected it was any thing else. This they immediately entered, and found themselves in a kind of antichamber, which, however, presented no idea of being inhabited; but, on the contrary, exhibited an aspect of gloomy neglect and ruinous desolation. A long, high, and narrow window rudely formed in the rock, and overshadowed by a variety of shrubs which grew in the surrounding crevices, here, as in every other casement of the place, thickly concealed the exterior appearance from casual observation: a rough, and seemingly natural projection, resembling pillars, on each side, formed a deep recess, and increased the dreary look of the whole, particularly behind, where their immense size prevented almost a single ray of light from penetrating, and literally rendered "darkness visible."

"Poor Victorine!" said the Countess, as she stopped near the pillar on the left hand, and spoke for the first time during their progress, "poor Victorine sent for me in a hurry this afternoon; she has been much alarmed by a renewal of the vile rumour that formerly reached us through Mr. Hastings. Agnes had received it from some of the people who occasionally supply the Convent with
fuel;

fuel; but ignorant of Victorine's real extraction, or that her safety was in any manner implicated in the purposed execution of such a scheme, she mentioned the circumstance merely as the report of the day, accompanying it with an enquiry if a daughter of the Emperor Joseph existed, answering the description of this lady, "whom, poor thing," added she, "I sincerely pity if there is in fact such a person; for it is said, while one party avow their intention of discovering her retreat, and placing her on the throne, their opponents swear she shall pay with her life, should a design so presumptuous be attempted in her favour."

"Alarmed, and eager to communicate this intelligence, while solicitous to learn what I myself had heard on the subject," continued Madame de Narbonne, "Victorine immediately requested to see me; and desirous to prevent any enquiry after the cause of our absence by the ladies now at the Castle, I directed Agathe to intimate (if necessary) that, on account of indisposition, I wished to be alone for the evening.—In consequence of this intention, the message sent to your aunt was partly delivered, for I knew not how far her restless temper and unceasing love of change might carry her, if she suspected our mutual absence originated in any thing mysterious. Since my arrival here, I have exerted all the influence I know I possess over the mind of
this

this dear girl, to sooth her fears, and dispel those apprehensions which, I am sorry to say, would too surely be verified, were this projected plan for her elevation to be put in practice. She is now become more composed, and begged you might be admitted to her chamber immediately on coming to the rock; your peregrination through its dark and solitary excavations is now nearly over, for a few steps farther finishes it.

While she yet spoke, Madame de Narbonne advanced to the dark recess formed by the projection of the rude unshapen pillar that overshadowed the left side of the antichamber, and uncovering a small silver lantern she usually carried on these occasions, raised it to the wall, where, after a short examination, another door, similar to that by which they had entered, yielded to the magic touch of the Countess, and exhibited a most beautiful little apartment, furnished in a style which might justly come under the denomination of elegance;—no person, however, was visible in it.

“ This is one of the rooms where those of an inferior order,” said Madame, “ who act in a domestic capacity, usually reside:—there are recesses on that side, accommodated with beds; other conveniences, calculated for the use of the table, are also to be found concealed here; but few people of the description I mention are admitted, unless their

own safety happens to be deeply implicated, and their secrecy by that means secured. Margaretta and her daughter Agnes perform every office that is necessary on the present occasion; and their young mistress appears to be perfectly satisfied with this limited number of attendants. I left the lay-sister here on my quitting Victorine to meet you: I presume she is at no great distance."

A sound of low murmuring voices now reached them. The Countess stepped forward, and throwing open an opposite door, desired Charlotte to follow her.

The chamber into which she was now shewn, was lighted from above by a gilt lamp of some size. This hung nearly over a very beautiful ebony table, upon which, in a musing attitude, rested an arm of the purest white, while the angelic form to which it belonged, raised her head, that languidly reclined upon it, at the sound of their approach; and glancing a momentary look to the door, immediately motioned for Agnes (who stood near her with a smelling bottle in her hand) to retire. She then rose from her seat with the dignified air of a superior being, softened by an expression of the most fascinating sweetness; and advancing to meet them, received the offered hand of Charlotte, presented for her acceptance by the Countess, with an address so flattering, and a manner

ner so irresistibly prepossessing, that Mademoiselle de Cordet secretly vowed from that instant to render her every possible service ; and even determined to risk her own life in the defence of this amiable girl, if succeeding circumstances should require such a sacrifice for her preservation.

CHAP. IV.

“ 'Tis friendship's office

“ To come when counsel and when help is wanting,

“ To share the pain of every gnawing care,

“ To speak of comfort in the time of trouble,

“ To reach a hand, and save from dire adversity.”

ROWE.

AFTER the first introductory ceremonies were over, the ladies seated themselves on a sofa near the table, and immediately began to converse on the subject which particularly interested their feelings at this juncture. While various opinions were given on the occasion, and the nature of the report which had distressed Victorine formed a principal

principal part of the discourse that took place between her and Madame de Narbonne, Charlotte, who was seated nearly opposite the former, had an opportunity of observing her with some attention; and was struck with the family resemblance she seemed to bear to the Imperial House of Austria, but particularly remarked the elegant proportion of her fine graceful figure, which, with the harmonious tones of her voice as she spoke to the Countess, fell more within the compass of her notice than the symmetry of her features, or their appropriate charms: though, from the casual judgment she was yet enabled to form of them, these appeared fully equal, if not superior, in captivating loveliness, to those once possessed by her unfortunate aunt, the late Marie Antoinette.

Charlotte's mind was an active one, and its ideas powerfully creative:—as she fixed her eyes on the daughter of Joseph the Second, a thousand ideal circumstances started forth on the canvas of a glowing imagination. Fancy portrayed her in the midst of splendid magnificence and imperial pomp, surrounded by the gay, the happy, the rich, and the mighty—the idol of every heart, and the source of every pleasure to all who knew her!—she to whom the needy looked up for assistance, and the wretched for comfort!—who never appeared

without a train of admirers, whose very wishes were prevented, and whose word was a law!—The sad, sad reverse her fate *now* exhibited, on reversing the picture, produced too strong a contrast for the feelings of the painter:—but the sensation was momentary; indignation at a lot so unmerited soon recalled her wandering thoughts, and new-strung every nerve with additional fortitude!

The varying emotions this train of thought imprinted on a countenance ever indicative of what was passing in her generous bosom, appeared too evident to escape notice.

During a pause in her conversation with the Countess, Victorine turned her head to address her, and was instantly struck with the consequent remarks that followed:—she fixed her blue eyes, with a more scrutinizing look, on the face of her guest, and regarded her with a benignant smile, while the tear of sensibility half dimmed her view, and coursed over the glowing cheek on which it glistened as it fell, like the early dew-drops of the morning.

“Friendship, Mademoiselle,” said she, “is still mine at least:—I read your thoughts—but *its* genial warmth is superior to all the empty glare of fleeting grandeur; *that* has long been on the wane with me!—The other (as I have experimentally

mentally proved) departs not with the courtier's bow, or the resplendent lustre of a rising sun. We will hope for better days—nay we will even flatter ourselves with a future possibility of rewarding those to whose benevolent exertions the sole remaining comfort of the wretched is entirely due! I have long been convinced that happiness is independent of *rank* or *riches*; nor do I ever more wish to possess either at the expence of those calamities which too often lurk in some neighbouring corner to poison their enjoyment. I can honestly add, that the principal source of my anxiety originates at present in those apprehensions which torture my mind, lest the place of my retreat should be discovered, and the friends to whom I am so infinitely indebted, of course involved in my ruin!"

While Victorine continued speaking, her auditress had a better opportunity of viewing the features of her who thus addressed her; and she soon perceived they were not new to her recollection, but where she had formerly seen them, was at present beyond the discriminating powers of her memory to ascertain. A vague, indistinct impression of this circumstance, however, so totally occupied every thought, that Victorine had already become silent for some time, before her attention was roused to the observation by the voice of Madame

de Narbonne.—She now started from her reverie ; apologized for her apparent absence of mind, and, in a few minutes more, caught herself falling again into the same error.

A kind of fluttering noise from an apartment near them now took place, and was repeatedly renewed after short intervals of silence.

“ Ah, my poor little fellow !” cried Victorine, rising from her seat, “ I must not leave you a prey to the superior strength of your enemies, while thus kindly sheltered from those of my own species, who lie in eager expectation of accomplishing their own designs by my destruction !”

Saying this, she opened a door nearly opposite to that by which they entered ; from the small apartment to which it belonged, the sound of a closing casement was soon distinctly heard, and Victorine immediately re-appeared, with the bird perched upon her hand which had formerly been observed by Charlotte fluttering before a high projection of the rock. Victorine fed it with some crumbs of bread that were scattered on a marble slab, over which hung a large gilded cage, where having closed it up for the night, she returned again to her seat.

Thus were the two mysterious circumstances of the white bird, and the unaccountable music proceeding from the rock, the latter of which particularly

cularly had caused so many strange surmises, at once explained in the most satisfactory manner.

Before these three friends separated for the evening, Madame de Narbonne and Charlotte had the pleasure of seeing Victorine's spirits more composed than the former had found them on her first arrival at the recess.

Mademoiselle de Cordet undertook to get what intelligence could be obtained from any of the guests at the Castle, relative to the rumour thus repeatedly revived, in which the future safety of Victorine was so deeply implicated; and she promised to return as early on the following day as such information reached her.

On retiring from Victorine's apartments, the Countess explained to her companion the different methods of opening and securing the various doors through which they passed; she likewise shewed her another private way, that communicated with Margaretta's cottage, from whence provisions, with every other necessary accommodation, was conveyed to the interior of the rock. Having mentioned all that she judged requisite to disclose at present, they descended from the porch of the saloon, and returned to the Castle.

M. de Clermont, who had desired one of the domestics to inform him when Mademoiselle de Cordet re-appeared, met her as she entered the

drawing-room, and leading her aside, presented a packet which had just arrived, with some letters addressed to himself, from Paris. She immediately perceived the superscription was in the hand of her friend Madame Duval, and retired to peruse the contents.

These, however, were not to be instantly come at. Enveloped in a number of covers, each of which had a different seal and fictitious direction, (a plan formerly agreed upon to evade the chance of any accidental discovery, when information of consequence made it dangerous to be too secure), Charlotte's heart palpitated with expectation while unfolding them, convinced something of importance was finally to meet her view:—nor was she deceived in this idea.—Madame Duval gave a particular account of the late proceedings in the metropolis; on which occasion Robespierre and Marat, as usual, made the most prominent figures in every bloody scene.

Charlotte's correspondent had formerly belonged to the household of Madame Elizabeth, and, from several interesting traits in her character, continued to retain a distinguished place in her remembrance.

In consequence of this predilection, the unfortunate Princess had contrived to send her a sealed paper, accompanied with a request to forward it to the
Countess

Countess de Narbonne by the first safe but private conveyance; and judging both these injunctions would be best accomplished by the assistance of a messenger from Clermont, who had just then called upon her, Madame Duval of course entrusted him with the confidential execution of this commission.

Having read thus far, she deposited the remainder of the packet (which, by a casual glance over the contents, appeared of little further consequence) in a writing-case; and locking it, hastened to the Countess, who almost uniformly made a practice of retiring for the night to her own apartment, on quitting the rock.

Madame de Narbonne broke the seal with a trembling hand, and found her apprehensions verified by the intelligence now received.

It was from the Princess herself. The communications it contained were pathetically worded, written evidently in haste, and with an agitated pen.

She informed Madame de Narbonne that her own days were now numbered, and she was in hourly expectation of being led to the scaffold. On this subject, however, she seemed to have made up her mind, and spoke of the circumstance as an event for which she had long been prepared; but

the thoughts of the lonely and then deserted state of the Royal unhappy orphans, wrung her heart to agony. She therefore adjured the Countess, by all her hopes here or hereafter, to aid them on the first favourable opportunity in effecting their escape from a place where they would soon be deprived of the last remaining friend, relative, and companion, that had shared their lot, and endeavoured to soften the rigour of a long and dreary captivity.

With her usual humanity, and considerate attention to the welfare of others, she likewise besought a continuance of Madame de Narbonne's good offices for the daughter of Joseph the Second; but implored her, in the most solemn manner, never to lend her assistance to the elevation of Victorine, in opposition to the legitimate claims of the youthful Monarch; for which purpose she understood a scheme of a very nefarious description was still in contemplation, supported by people who would not scruple at any means, however atrocious, to attain the end in question. Madame Elizabeth concluded this address to the feelings of the Countess in the most energetic terms; again entreating her, by all she held sacred, to seize the first opening that offered for the emancipation of her brother's children, and to exert every nerve in their preservation from the machinations of public or private enemies.

“ The

“The packet that accompanies this, was entrusted to my care by the late unfortunate Marie Antoinette,” added the Princess; “she gave it me at our last interview, and requested it might be delivered into Madame de Mercour’s own hands: that request, however, I have never hitherto been able to perform. To you I therefore consign it, as most likely to fulfil the Queen’s intentions in its final destination; her Majesty’s seal you will perceive, Madame, is upon it; it has never been examined by me.”

The Princess added little more of any importance: she alluded a second time to her approaching dissolution in language that marked the mild but sublime fortitude of a real Christian; and finished by taking a solemn and affecting leave of the Countess and Victorine, to whose prayers she earnestly recommended her departing soul!

Madame de Narbonne’s eyes, long before she reached the last sentence, were suffused in tears. The letter dropped from her hand; and covering her face with her handkerchief, she sobbed aloud.

After the first paroxysm of grief had subsided, she silently gave it to Charlotte for her perusal; and gazing on the superscription of the packet addressed to poor Magdeleine, paused over it for several moments with a look of unutterable anguish;—then pressing

pressing the Royal seal to her lips, she broke it open with a deep sigh, and proceeded to examine the contents, in the firm but melancholy persuasion that no Madame de Mercour would ever more appear to reclaim it, and equally convinced that it contained some intelligence of sufficient importance to authorize the inspection, situated as public affairs were at this crisis, even though originally intended for another person.

In the envelope were several papers, all of which appeared to have belonged either to the Emperor, or Victorine's mother; and amongst others, a certificate of a private marriage, which, for the satisfaction of the latter, her Royal lover had agreed to indulge her in, merely, however, as an individual source of secret comfort; for, from concomitant circumstances, it was evident she was bound in the strictest manner never to divulge such an event, as its disclosure could be of little benefit to herself, but might involve the man on whom she doted to distraction, in disagreeable difficulties: and so well had this instance of the Emperor's attachment and condescension been guarded, that till those written proofs of their existence were exhibited, not the smallest suspicion of such an event had transpired, even to those most interested in the happiness and welfare of either party, or anxious
for

for the particular exculpation of the one, who on similar occasions is always the greatest victim to popular prejudice.

Indeed the whole tenor of this amiable woman's conduct had apparently been more regulated by what she imagined of political importance to the Emperor, than any secret wish, however powerful, for the public vindication of her own character :—an uncommon mode of thinking we grant, even in this *pure and enlightened* epocha of the world, when the *spirit of emancipation* from moral ties and social intercourse nobly exerts its independent right to promote selfish gratification at the expence of the most sacred engagements, or the peace of our dearest friend.

The mother of Victorine had not, however, reached this pitch of human altitude; she was of the old school, and preferred integrity, with an un-reproaching conscience in the observance of her word, to the proudest boast of earthly pre-eminence, when of a nature to injure the man of her choice by a promulgation of her felicity. This sufficiently accounts for the discovery being so long retarded from the knowledge of her family.

The present disclosure of an incident, from which the consequent effects must frequently have subjected its object to many degrading suspicions, and
all

all the cutting taunts "that patient merit of the unworthy takes," was now contained in a letter from the Imperial Joseph to his sister, the Queen of France, and bore evident marks of having been written on his death-bed. In this epistle he acknowledges the validity of the secret union with his lamented Victorine, but avows a determined resolution to preclude the offspring of it from all legal pretensions to succeed him as the head of the German Empire; for which purpose, previous to this confession of his matrimonial engagement, proper measures had been taken to prevent any evil consequences resulting from a casual discovery of the truth hereafter:—and he even added that the circumstance of his particular ties to the mother of Victorine, would not have passed his lips from any other consideration, than an apprehension that the fact might afterwards come to light through the medium of some unforeseen accident; as he was ignorant how far her prudence and fortitude might have enabled her uniformly to conceal a secret of such magnitude in the estimation of the ambitious: especially when its disclosure was so peculiarly calculated to do away every stigma that might have been attached to former appearances, and exalt her at the same time to the most enviable station of human grandeur.—But Joseph appreciated her mind by that of those with whom he usually

usually associated, otherwise no fear of such a description could have alarmed him on her account. He concluded by recommending his daughter, in the energetic terms of affection and parental anxiety, to the protection of her aunt; informed her that a sum, calculated to support her even in a state of genteel affluence, was invested in the English funds for her future maintenance; but so managed in the placing of it, as to preclude all suspicion of her birth, or possibility of its discovery from that quarter. He prohibits her, at the same time, in the most solemn manner, from entering the German dominions, under the penalty of losing her pecuniary establishment, which in that event would immediately be withdrawn, and her person condemned to perpetual imprisonment. As she, therefore, observed the prescribed conditions, his dying blessing or malediction would descend upon her head through life; and he adjured the Queen to enforce this belief in the strongest terms.

The remainder of the Emperor's letter was replete with ardent expressions of regard for his deceased Victorine, and indubitable proofs of a heart glowing with the tenderest affection for her offspring; though its feelings were evidently repressed in their natural extent, from a consideration of what he owed to the future welfare of his people, by preserving them from the horrors of a disputed succession,

cession, and the consequent anarchy and confusion unavoidably attendant on that worst of all human evils, a civil war.

He afterwards addresses some observations to her Majesty on the subject of their present individual situations, and speaks of both with a degree of sensibility which could not fail to soften the most hardened bosom; but as it is only necessary to recapitulate what is principally connected with the young and lovely object of his solicitude, we shall not enter further upon the contents of this moving epistle.

By a memorandum written on the back of this letter, it was to be given only to the Queen herself; which explained the cause of its delivery being so long procrastinated, as her Majesty's disagreeable situation had for some time rendered the performance of the latter injunction impracticable. Of course it was but a short period before her execution, that it had been found possible to accomplish the Emperor's orders in this instance; and long after he himself had finally passed that bourn, from whence no traveller e'er returns!

The other articles enclosed in this packet were of various descriptions, but all valuable on account of those to whom they had formerly appertained:— letters from Victorine to her Imperial husband; two miniature paintings richly ornamented with
jewels;

jewels; rings of value; lockets containing the united ciphers of her parents, done in their own hair; some remembrances from the Queen herself, accompanied by a short but pathetic epistle to Victorine, and another to Madame de Narbonne of the same description; which latter enclosed a bill from the Emperor on a foreign bank for present exigencies; it was to a considerable amount, and made payable at sight.

The new aspect this unexpected discovery gave to the face of affairs, rendered a long consultation on the future conduct of them necessary; and at length it was agreed by the two friends, to call in the advice and assistance of M. de Clermont, in mitigation of the increasing difficulties which perpetually arose to their view.

Charlotte undertook the office of breaking the ice to him; and afterwards conducted him to the apartment of the Countess, where every preliminary, requisite for the execution of auxiliary aid on any emergency at the rock, was speedily adjusted to the mutual satisfaction of all parties concerned; and M. de Clermont henceforth admitted to the privileges of counsellor and principal adviser, whenever his assistance could be procured with safety to himself and his family;—two circumstances which Madame was particularly careful to ascertain before she

she would permit herself to benefit by his friendly exertions to serve her.

Hitherto the domestic arrangements of the Castle had been generally carried on under the auspices of the *maître d'hôtel*, a venerable old man of much respectability; whose birth was originally above his station, and whose character proved likewise so meritorious and uniformly proper, that even De la Ville himself (either finding it impossible to avoid treating him with some degree of attention, or convinced of the incalculable advantages daily accruing from an agent of such unshaken integrity having the management of his affairs), was induced on all occasions to pay him a marked deference, not always to be met with in his manner of behaviour to those whom he chose to imagine his inferiors.

In consequence of this fortunate circumstance, the worthy old man readily yielded to the entreaties of the Countess; and in compliance with her solicitations, had agreed to retain his usual station in the mansion.

Indeed this condescension on his side did not put any great force on his inclinations; for much as he disliked his new master, and secretly reprobated every part of his proceedings, Madame would not have been the only sufferer by his departure from the Castle:—he had borne her in his arms when a child, before accumulated misfortunes raised her to
splendid

splendid misery, and laid the foundation of still deeper sorrows :—he loved her with parental affection, thought her the first of human beings, and the longer he knew De la Ville, felt his compassion for her much-altered state proportionably increase, convinced, by every succeeding observation, that compulsion, not choice, could only have prevailed upon her to enter into matrimonial engagements with a character of his description. By the absence of the latter, he had lately found the principal weight of domestic affairs devolve upon his own shoulders, for Madame de Narbonne now delegated all her authority to him : this mark of unshaken confidence, through the mysterious vicissitudes of her recent sufferings, was an evident proof of the high estimation in which she held him ; and he felt it would have been impossible to retire from the service of a mistress so indulgent, so confiding, and so visibly unfortunate, even though the trifling master she had given him, happened to be yet more contemptible than he had hitherto shewn himself.

Since the days of Madame de Narbonne's grandfather (the short period of her brother's last residence at home excepted), the good *maître d'hôtel* had almost enjoyed a sinecure place in the family, undisturbed by tumultuous crowds of intrusive visitors, or the fatiguing attention perpetually required

required for the accommodation of indiscriminate society. But he saw his services were of importance to that wish for retirement which, like Aaron's rod, appeared to absorb every other sentiment of her heart. He therefore repined not at exertions so unsuitable to his time of life; but continued to exercise the incumbent duties of his office with the cheerful alacrity of youth, and the unobtrusive solicitude of real friendship.

M. de Clermont, however, in addition to the new appointment of privy counsellor, now offered his assistance to relieve the good old man whenever an opportunity occurred for that purpose. This mark of attention was gratefully received; and Monsieur of course constituted "master of the ceremonies, *pro tempore*, in the Castle."

CHAP. V.

“ With ev’ry grace that Nature’s hand could give,
“ And with a mind so great, it spoke its essence
“ Immortal and divine.”

ROWE.

FROM the time of her introduction to Victorine, Mademoiselle de Cordet could not divest herself of the idea that her features were not unknown to her ; but at what particular period, or where she had seen them, it was not in her power to recollect. They appeared too interesting, however, even from the imperfect view afforded by the dim light of the lamp on the preceding evening, and the unfavourable situation in which she
was

was then seated under it, to be passed over without creating an ardent inclination for a more minute scrutiny. She therefore prevailed upon the Countess to leave the Castle at an earlier hour than usual, for the purpose of visiting her new acquaintance before sunset.

Agitated by the unexpected discovery of Victorine's legal though prohibited claim to Royalty, and deeply affected by the whole contents of the Queen's packet, Madame de Narbonne had spent a restless night, and awoke from broken, perturbed slumbers equally unrefreshed in mind and body. She therefore declined seeing any of the guests now at the Castle, and kept her chamber till the day was far advanced.—A civil message, however, was again sent to Madame de Clermont; and as that lady, at present quite in her element, had no leisure to waste on invalids, her own attention and that of the other visitors was too much engaged in the alternate promotion and enjoyment of pleasurable pursuits, to prove any restraint on the motions of her from whom was derived that plenitude of power so fully exercised.

While De la Ville acted as master of the mansion, its former owner, disgusted with the world, and become indifferent to the succession of events it continually produced, disdained to interfere or take any share whatever in arrangements where

moral turpitude, superior force, or the semblance of a legitimate title to command, furnished pretensions for assuming a character he was so little calculated to fill with any degree of propriety. But the continuance of that silence, which had now so long prevailed respecting his fate, seemed to mark it as ultimately decided in the grave; and the victim of his duplicity, indulging the idea with that eager sensation which seizes the mind on any prospect of relief from existing misery, though she literally "rejoiced with trembling," yet ventured to encourage the possibility of emancipation from the heavy chain under which she had latterly groaned.—From affection, esteem, respect, or any of the other ties calculated to attach a heart like her's, the unfortunate De la Ville could claim nothing:—his conduct had uniformly excluded him from every sentiment of the kind; and Madame de Narbonne pretended not to regret, even in appearance, the destiny of a man from whose society she shrunk with horror, and to whose nefarious authority she solely yielded from motives of the cruellest necessity.

The behaviour of the Countess on this occasion did not serve to lessen the former astonishment her ill-sorted union had created. In fact, it threw a new air of mystery over the whole of that trans-

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action ; and, to those totally unacquainted with the particular circumstances of it, represented her disposition as equally inconsistent and versatile.

But though M. de Clermont had not been altogether entrusted with the unlimited confidence of Madame de Narbonne, he yet knew enough of her private history to acquit her, in his own mind, of both these charges ; and therefore exerted himself to indemnify her for the erroneous opinion of others, by endeavouring to turn their attention into another channel ; to free her, by that means, from inconvenient observation ; and, in short, to exercise the full uncontrolled authority with which he was recently invested, for directing the more important arrangements in the superior departments of the Castle ; while, by so doing, its mistress was left at liberty to conduct the different avocations in which she was secretly engaged.

On approaching Victorine's apartments, Charlotte observed that the Countess took a less circuitous route, though in an opposite direction :—when they entered the organ gallery of the chapel, she likewise perceived they were following the same path which the female figure in white had formerly pursued, while they were seated at the tomb of St. Hypolite ; she therefore concluded it was Victorine they had then seen.

The

The Countess smiled as Charlotte made this remark, and said that it was not the first occasion where the powers of fancy had been known to turn ghosts into solid corporeal forms. She was going to add something further ; but perceiving her companion's face crimsoned by the recollection of the imbecile apprehensions which had seized her mind at that period, Madame de Narbonne checked herself, and walked on to the end of the gallery. At this place a dark green velvet curtain descended from the ceiling, which being partially put aside by her conductor, Charlotte immediately discovered the tutelary Saint of Narbonne executed in dark marble, large as the life, and placed on a pedestal surrounded by several small figures, emblematical of Protection, Hope, and Fidelity.

The Countess moved the anchor on which the second of those figures reclined, when the pedestal slowly dividing, one half with the statue and its accompanying ornaments, opened like a door, while the other half, forming the under part of the said pedestal, remained behind in its first position.—Madame de Narbonne stepped upon the latter—Charlotte followed; they entered a small space, apparently a nich for the tutelary Saint, but in fact a narrow passage leading to Victorine's abode ; along which they had not proceeded far, ere the holy sentinel

returned to his place, with a hollow echoing sound that reverberated through the interior of the rock in a manner so extraordinary as to appear entirely on the opposite side from that where it really originated.

The Countess now threw open a door on the right, and Victorine was instantly discovered rising from her knees, before an altar of massy silver, on which stood a crucifix of the same metal richly gilt, and executed in a style of uncommon excellence.

At it was not the usual time for the performance of her evening devotions, the ladies started back, and were softly retiring to the passage; but she entreated them to advance, and accounted for the circumstance they had witnessed, by saying, that her prayers were addressed for the soul of Madame de Mercour, and her fellow-prisoner in the Abbaye, poor Bertha, for whose happiness in a better state she daily offered a fervent petition to Heaven!

It was a clear, beautiful evening; the sun had not yet set, but his glowing rays tinged every object with their bright celestial colouring.—Victorine led the Countess to the window of the apartment they now entered; and as she motioned for Charlotte to take her seat on the sofa, a beam of light fell upon her countenance in a direction particularly

particularly favourable for observation. Recollection flashed immediately on the memory of Mademoiselle de Cordet; and the individual features portrayed in the miniature picture so highly prized by St. Julian, stood recognized before her!

Astonished at a discovery so entirely unexpected, Charlotte continued to gaze on the object of it, till a rosy blush suffused the lovely cheeks of Victorine. This remark made her first sensible of the failure in politeness of which she had now been guilty; seating herself, therefore, as desired, she fixed her eyes upon the floor, absorbed in a silent reverie, and buried in the perplexing mazes of surmise, mentally endeavoured to draw some conclusion from appearances so strangely unaccountable.

That this new-found resemblance was not produced by any deception of sight, she had several opportunities of ascertaining before they separated for the night; and every succeeding view brought incontrovertible confirmation that she could by no means be mistaken in her observations on the subject.

She was now no longer surprised at the value St. Julian seemed to put upon his little miniature, for beautiful as it unquestionably appeared, the original, in her opinion, even surpassed it; and in proportion as her acquaintance increased with the

latter, those charms, aided by the force of mental superiority, became more and more fascinating; but ignorant of the particular events connected with an acknowledgment of the above circumstance, and unacquainted with the nature of the incidents that might be involved in an attempt to develop this mystery, Charlotte, with her usual prudent foresight, determined (after several struggles with the restless spirit of curiosity), to restrain its impetuous instigations till she learned whether or no they could be indulged with safety to others, and individual satisfaction to herself.

This resolution, however, did not exclude the intention of watching for another interview with the possessor of the picture, whom she secretly purposed to sound at a distance, but in such a manner as to prevent the smallest probability of occasioning any disagreeable consequence, whatever might be the result of the enquiry.

But though the vicinity of Narbonne hitherto appeared the almost stationary quarters of St. Julian, he had not of late been seen in that neighbourhood. It was therefore supposed M. Charette had dispatched him on some momentous piece of duty in a distant part of the province.

Days and weeks continued to steal away without any material alteration in the state of affairs at the

the Castle.—Charlotte spent much of her time with Victorine, where she made a point of accompanying the Countess, and relieving her mind both of anxiety and fatigue by the participation she took in all that interested her, relative to the fair recluse.

Tranquil at least, if not happy, Mademoiselle Victorine determined to give proofs of her gratitude, by endeavouring to turn her thoughts from irremediable evils, to the advantages enjoyed in a retreat where safety and friendship appeared to be her's beyond the adventitious changes of life to affect.

In pursuance of this resolution, she exerted herself to banish the tormenting recollection of past scenes, where gloomy retrospection only served to call forth melancholy remembrances, and, by clouding the brow with sorrow, gave that air of interior discontent, which could not fail to distress her generous benefactors, after the pains they had taken, and the sacrifices they had made of every selfish consideration, for her interest and convenience.

Those happily possessed of a strong mind and consequent steady disposition, well know that constant employment is the surest means to strengthen every good purpose, and exclude the approach of evil from the heart of the virtuous and the wise.—Victorine, sensible of this fact, prudently evinced a

degree of mental force that would have done honour to riper years. She kept herself regularly occupied in the practice of those elegant pursuits in which she was a general adept; and alternately yielded to the bias of inclination, as it pointed them out for information or amusement. She worked, she read, she played upon the harp, and even sometimes touched the organ at those hours, when, either from their very late or very early description, the probable chance of discovery seemed evaded.—M. de Clermont managed so as to allow her two friends more frequent opportunities of renewing their daily visits than durst otherwise have been attempted; and a succession of guests at the Castle furnished sufficient business for his indefatigable helpmate in the variety of entertainments she prided herself on exhibiting to please them.

Her worthy husband, however, was sometimes obliged to be absent on his own affairs: nevertheless this circumstance was rather of use than otherwise to his friends at the Castle.—The residence of M. de Clermont lay particularly favourable for receiving intelligence from La Vendée; and on such occasions he seldom failed to make the most of this advantage.

That part of the country had remained tolerably tranquil since the last victory obtained by the Royalists.

Royalists. This was likewise the case at the immediate juncture in the metropolis; where, either satisfied with the effusion of human blood, or secretly preparing for another deluge of it, the opposite parties contented themselves with the windy war of words in their public meetings, or satisfied their taste for cruelty by sending a solitary victim now and then to the scaffold: but the latter transaction, in the savage wit, and barbarous disposition of the period, was merely said to be *pour passer les tems*, till the next popular commotion oiled the springs of the guillotine, and made it play to a quicker tune!

That quarter of the forest where Charlotte first encountered St Julian, was, as we have formerly observed, much frequented by small parties of Charette's army. It contained several places of concealment favourable to their safety, when unprepared to repel any threatened or sudden attack of the enemy; and not only in this light, but many others, proved of infinite benefit to that body of men, whose peculiar situation rendered every local circumstance of consequence, in one respect or another.

From considerations of this nature, their Commander continually enforced the necessity of observing the most peaceable conduct in the forest and its environs. In fact, a different mode of proceed-

ing could serve no good purpose, and must eventually be productive of many bad ones, amongst which, the probable discovery of their usual haunts would not prove the least detrimental; as, in that case, they must either be obliged to quit them entirely, or at best find those retreats too much an object of suspicion, to be of any future importance for the purposes to which they were formerly allotted.

This prudent precaution of Charette's had hitherto prevented any material disclosure of their manœuvres in that quarter. Indeed he frequently renounced probable advantages from the mere apprehension of risking certain ones, which in the present instance must have followed, had they been forced to evacuate their footing in the forest.

CHAP. VI.

- “ One part, one little part we dimly scan
“ Through the dark medium of life’s feverish dream ;
“ Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,
“ If but that little part incongruous seem.
“ Nor is it that perhaps what mortals deem—
“ Oft from apparent ill our blessings rise.

BEATTIE.

AT length the comparative tranquillity enjoyed by the inhabitants of the Castle, was destined to receive an interruption of a most disagreeable and unwelcome nature.

A victory, in some situations, may be attended with consequences nearly as fatal to the conqueror as the conquered.

The main body of the Royalists, originally inferior in number to their opponents, had been so considerably lessened in the last engagement, as to find themselves under the necessity of avoiding every chance of any further rencounter with the latter, till their force was again recruited, and become more equal to that with which they had to contend.

On this account the requisite movements had hitherto been conducted with the utmost caution and secrecy; but a scarcity of provisions that lately prevailed in the camp, accompanied by symptoms of an epidemical disorder, rendered a partial change of measures indispensable, and induced the Commander in Chief to endeavour at getting rid of the prisoners, who, from their immense number, were found to be extremely inconvenient and burthenfome. It was therefore judged expedient either to ransom or exchange the principal part of them, as could best be agreed upon between the two conflicting factions.

Upon this occasion De la Ville, whose fate had so long been wrapped in obscurity, unhappily once more appeared on the stage of that world, from the confines of which it was hoped he had finally been removed for ever!

This incident proved a severe and unexpected stroke to the inhabitants of the Castle, and totally demolished

demolished those visionary prospects of tranquillity so prematurely indulged by its unfortunate mistress.

He who caused this disagreeable reverse, had been closely confined amongst those who were entirely ignorant of the name and rank of their fellow-prisoner. Placed in a distant dungeon, unheeded and despised for the contemptible turn of mind he possessed, this man, who had the power to render so many of his superiors uncomfortable at Narbonne, was here treated with very little ceremony by the thoughtless beings with whom he was condemned to associate; and his vapouring claims to particular distinction continually held in the utmost derision.

But the Royalists, appointed to transact the business of an exchange, were at pains to discover the real circumstances of the prisoners previous to its commencement; and this investigation produced a knowledge of De la Ville's situation, which occasioned his freedom to be proportionably bargained for. A written demand made on this account, was of course the first certain intelligence of his existence that had arrived since the memorable period of the engagement, and his consequent disappearance took place.

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It may easily be supposed this news was not of the most acceptable description, or received with much pleasure by those most connected with his resuscitation. Indeed the visible alteration it produced on every countenance, sufficiently indicated the nature of their feelings, and the reluctance with which it was heard.

Fortunately the distance from whence he had to come, and the necessary arrangements to be made previous to his liberation, afforded Madame de Narbonne and Charlotte an opportunity of settling the mode of their future proceedings, and regulating their measures in the manner they conceived most conducive to the furtherance of those views, of which particular circumstances might hereafter require the accomplishment.

Though secret emissaries were employed to obtain a reception for Victorine in England, not the smallest intimation had yet been received of their success. The silence that continued on this subject, had long caused much surprise; but it now became a matter of more serious import, and gave rise to great anxiety for the consequences that might reasonably be expected to follow so untoward a circumstance, at a juncture so peculiarly critical.

These reflections produced several conferences on the subject; and fearful, though ignorant, of
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De la Ville's intended movements on his return, it was at length agreed to extend the circle of communication by admitting an addition to their councils. This idea was first suggested by Victorine herself, who, on learning they had frequently English guests at the Castle, had indulged a secret hope of the advantage to be derived from their assistance—an expectation considerably strengthened by the interesting traits repeatedly given of their respective characters, in the energetic and glowing language of Mademoiselle de Cordet, who never appeared more particularly animated than when employed in expatiating on the various degrees of merit possessed by those fortunate enough to be ranked amongst the number that were honoured with her friendship and good opinion. Perhaps, however, a warmer sensation than common esteem frequently mingled with her feelings, on an introduction of any thing in the course of conversation allusive to the British nation. For on one of these occasions she gave so romantic and beautiful a picture of a rural retreat belonging to Mr. Hastings in the north of England, that, amidst the air-built fabrics in which the wretched are sometimes apt to indulge the reveries of imagination, Victorine had more than once escaped in fancy from the boundaries of the Republic, and transported herself to the peaceful abode, where
neither

neither the ravages of civil war, nor the ambition of nominal friends, could longer molest her tranquillity, or prove the means of depriving her of that liberty, the birthright of mankind, under *proper restrictions*!

But though the captive daughter of Joseph the Second would have considered the attainment of so humble a residence as "a consummation devoutly to be wished" in the present state of her affairs, yet she had hitherto suffered her mind to wander in search of this object, rather from a wish to detach it from more distressing reflections, than any prospect of such a view being realized. No practical idea of a similar scheme had in fact ever occurred to her thoughts; for she still continued to entertain no doubt of ultimately procuring that protection from the British Court itself, to which the summit of her wishes soared. Now, however, almost weary of hope deferred, the visionary scene once more glanced across her thoughts as a dernier resort, should other expectations prove abortive.

The Countess mused over the former part of Victorine's proposal in mournful silence. She feared to extend the secrets of the rock, and dreaded the consequences, whether accidental or intentional, that might result from a more enlarged communication.

Charlotte,

Charlotte, however, caught at the proposition with eager avidity; more sanguine in disposition, and better acquainted with the characters of those it immediately concerned, she professed her entire confidence in their honour with all the warmth of friendship, and declared herself too well assured of their principles, to entertain the smallest doubt of a ready acquiescence in any thing that could be serviceable to either Madame de Narbonne or —

She was proceeding to expatiate on the merit of the Englishmen, when the Countess, surprised at the emphatical manner in which they were mentioned, (and ignorant of the mutual attachment existing between the encomiast and one of those gentlemen), raised her head, and regarded her with a melancholy smile which, in a language more forcible than words, seemed to say,

‘ She has not felt the giddy turns of fortune !’

“ She has not yet had cause, like me, to fear the disappointment of rational hope, or the hidden hand of treachery, which, during our intercourse with the world, so often fills the cup of well-formed expectation with wormwood ! Alas ! she reckons not on the thousand difficulties that oppose themselves.

selves on all sides to the completion of our most innocent wishes, when the interest of others come in contact with them !”

“ You are silent, my dear Madam,” said Charlotte, while the colour yet glowed upon her cheek, which the expressive look of the Countess had called forth, and which was ascribed to the knowledge of a secret that lady was still, as we have observed, unacquainted with—“ you are silent, my dear Madam ; but I have so long accustomed myself to study your countenance, that I half suspect you do not entirely coincide in my opinion. Surely,” added she, in a hesitating voice, “ you cannot doubt the honour of our English friends !”

“ By no means,” replied Madame de Narbonne. “ No, I certainly do not ; but I very much doubt our capability to profit by it, if put to the trial. We will not, however, do any thing rashly where so much is at stake : if M. de Clermont approves of the plan, it shall be immediately adopted. I can only have one objection on the occasion, and that arises from an apprehension of any accidental disclosure taking place in consequence of admitting a greater number of confidants. In other respects, the load of anxiety, which has long oppressed my
solitary

solitary heart, would be considerably lessened by the beneficial advice and assistance of two such able counsellors, in conjunction with the confessed abilities of our present colleague, M. de Clermont."

When acquainted with the result of this consultation, M. de Clermont instantly gave the scheme his decided approbation; and not only thought it plausible at present, but conceived the probable chance of deriving future advantage from it by no means either unlikely or unreasonable.

Sanctioned by this congeniality of opinion, Madame de Narbonne no longer hesitated; but having expressed a wish that the gentlemen should first be conducted to the Temple of Concord, she desired he would lead them there, and make the requisite communications.

This retired and beautiful spot was situated in a small island in the middle of a grove of poplars, and the access so contrived as to secure the visiter from the chance of sudden intrusion.

M. de Clermont readily complied with her desire; and the key of the interior apartment belonging to the Temple being delivered to him, followed the two Englishmen, whom he observed walking
arm

arm in arm at a distance, on the verge of the serpentine canal.

In a short time they returned, crossed an angle of the Park, and disappeared in the grove of poplars.

Some directions, which the Countess wanted to see personally executed, now led her to Margaretta's cottage; from whence, accompanied by Charlotte, she proceeded to the Convent, and, with a heavy heart, acquainted the Superior with the intelligence that had recently reached the Castle.

The good Lady Abbess, though at first much hurt by a circumstance which she too had likewise imagined would scarcely again happen, was yet enough her own mistress to speak peace on the occasion, and therefore endeavoured to sooth and console the wounded mind of her friend by using every possible exertion or argument she could think of for that purpose.

Madame de Narbonne's sorrows were never querulous nor loud, but they were deep in proportion to their stillness. She judged of the Superior's comparative feelings by her own, rather than the tranquil air, and look of mild composure her countenance exhibited while enforcing motives for patient resignation to the will of Providence.

And

And as she regarded her with a pensive and humid eye, "Ah me!" thought the poor sufferer,

"How many lift the head, look gay, and smile

"Against their consciences!"

Struck with the mournful expression of her features, though no complaint burst from her lips, the Abbess paused, and no longer able to repress her sympathetic sensations, drew her veil over her face, and gave way to a flood of tears. Such a relief would have been gladly welcomed by the Countess, but it was not at present destined to come to her aid. She arose, approached her weeping friend, and solemnly desiring her to be seated, without appearing to notice the state of her mind, recurred to the former topic of their discourse; during which she repeatedly recommended Victorine to her attention, and bespoke a continuation of those parental offices which she herself had so frequently experienced from this worthy woman. Madame then drew a duplicate of her will from her pocket, and requesting it might be deposited amongst the archives of the community, calmly recapitulated the arrangements already made, and yet to be made,

made, previous to the return of her Republican despot. Every thing being settled in this quarter as far as it was practicable, the two friends wished the Superior good night, and prepared to return to the Castle.

In crossing the court leading to the garden, they were accosted by Sister Veronica. From her they learned that a party of armed Royalists had lately passed the gates, some of whom seemed disposed to treat the portress with very little ceremony, and even evinced an intention to enter the Convent; but a young man, who appeared to be their Commander, coming up at this juncture, checked their presumption with an air of authority none of the number seemed inclined to dispute.

"I happened to be near her at the time," continued the Nun: "he spoke to us in the sweetest voice imaginable, entreated we would lay aside all apprehension of evil, and assured us his protection should be at the service of the community on any future emergency, when we chose to apply for it. *Apropos*, Madame—I suppose he is known at the Castle, for he enquired after you and Mademoiselle de Cordet, and expressed much anxiety for your welfare."

"If he carried his politeness so far," said Charlotte, "I presume you are acquainted with his name,

name, otherwise his offered services are of very little importance."

"Jesu Marie!" cried Veronica with a look of surprise, "did I not mention that circumstance? Well, to be sure, my late fright has made me stupid, I think. Why yes, he told me his name; at least he said, if we enquired for the Chevalier St. Julian, that was sufficient."

Madame de Narbonne started from her pensive attitude at the sound, and cast a languid glance at her companion. Charlotte's eye caught her's at the same instant. A pause of a moment ensued; the latter then turned again to the Nun.—"But, my good Veronica," said she, "you likewise forget to tell us where this St. Julian is to be found; he would certainly inform you of that circumstance too?"

"Holy St. Francis!" replied the sister, "how provoking!—Let me see! no, that is not it neither! I do believe I have forgot what he told us on that subject. Oh me! what a sad memory I have! But I was so terrified by his men, and so charmed with himself, that I scarcely knew what he said. The portress, however, no doubt remembers better; we will ask her immediately."

As they now proceeded to the gate, Veronica continually dwelt on the captivating appearance of
the

the Chevalier, who she protested must be every thing good and amiable.—“ Besides, Madame,” added she, addressing the Countess, “ I thought myself, at the time, more than half acquainted with him, for he bore so strong a resemblance to you ; and his very voice seemed to have the same soft tones, allowing for the difference between that of a man and a woman’s, that I really imagined I almost saw and heard you while he was with us.”

Madame de Narbonne grasped the supporting arm of Charlotte still tighter, and with trembling anxiety pressed forward to the portress.

On reaching the outer gate, Veronica instantly advanced before them, and applied to the lay-sister for information relative to St. Julian’s place of residence ; but here the enquiry was equally unsuccessful. The portress, otherwise engaged at the period, heard not a syllable of the matter, and consequently could not satisfy their curiosity.

Ever voluble, and fond of hearing herself talk, Veronica poured forth ceaseless lamentations on the error her powers of retention had committed ; and in the multitude of words which escaped her, Saints and Angels, Royalists and Republicans were indiscriminately mingled in one confused heap of invocation, reprobation, and appeal !

At

At length, relieved from her loquacity, the ladies were joined by Margaretta's husband, and reached the other side of the forest almost without breaking the profound silence which each seemed disposed to indulge.

CHAP. VII.

- “ Alas ! despair not, for there reigns above
“ A potent God that overlooks mankind :
“ To his directing hand submit your anger ;
“ Nor let your transports swell to wild distraction,
“ For ling’ring time knows his redressing hour.”

THEOBALD.

AS they entered the shrubbery, the Countess and Charlotte were met by Madame de Clermont, accompanied by one of her daughters and another lady who had lately come to the Castle.

It was not customary for the first of the *trio* to evince any violent inclination for the company of
Madame

Madame de Narbonne ; but the gentlemen were either absent or otherwise engaged, and she, somehow or other, took it into her head at this juncture to join the mistress of the mansion, who, in her present temper of mind, would willingly have dispensed with the honour of her presence.

Madame de Clermont was not deficient in a competent share of curiosity, neither was her husband remarkable for entertaining any great respect for her mental accomplishments: it is therefore more than probable that he did not consider a mutual confidence between them necessary; and it is no less probable, that the frequent conferences he was known to hold with the Countess, joined to the air of secrecy with which they were conducted, might possibly give a spur to her natural avidity for the science of *discovery*. Hence, perhaps, concluding something extraordinary was in contemplation, she wished to develop the seeming mystery, and of course resolved to attach herself to the person principally interested in it.

Be this as it may, whatever were her views, Madame found it impracticable to get rid of her without the most pointed disrespect and ill-breeding. She was consequently obliged to put a force on her inclinations, and accompany the party to the *salle à manger*.

Low-spirited and fatigued, the Countess threw herself into the first chair she found near the entrance of this apartment; and leaning her head upon the back of it, attempted not to speak, unless when some question was particularly addressed to her.

The rest of the company, however, seemed under no sort of restraint in this respect. All of them had paid a visit to the Convent during the course of the day, and they discoursed on the topic of their various observations with different degrees of interest, till the sound of approaching footsteps announced a partial interruption to the conversation.

Conceiving it to be only some of the gentlemen returning from their walk, the circumstance was little attended to, even though the door was now suddenly opened, and a servant, half bowing, held it in his hand.

At this instant, a voice that seemed the death-knell to every future prospect of enjoyment, struck with a cold, chill sensation on the hearts of some of the party, and speedily roused them from the transient state of tranquillity in which they were comparatively placed. It was De la Ville who spoke!

His

His return was not yet supposed practicable; and of course proved totally unexpected.

“A hectic of a moment” passed over the cheek of his unhappy wife. She instantly averted her eyes, and deeply sighing, rose to leave the room, heedless of all but the object of her disgust and terror.

Charlotte’s eyes flashed with indignant recollection;—she pushed back her chair as if instinctively recoiling from some abhorred reptile, and darted at him a look of inexpressible contempt.

Astonishment, however, soon seized every faculty when she saw him advance to meet the Countess, and turning round, take a gentleman by the hand, who followed him.

The last shades of twilight now prevailed, and threw a solemn gloom over the spacious apartment, which rendered it difficult to discriminate objects with whom the company were not particularly acquainted.

While he led the stranger up the room, (for they entered from an opposite door to that by which Madame de Narbonne had seated herself), De la Ville was profuse in his praise, and presented him to the Countess in terms of the warmest eulogium.

To an introduction from such a quarter little attention was however to be expected, though even

assured "she owed the life of her husband to his interference."

This information was not, in her opinion, any recommendatory motive for gratitude!—The Countess slightly curtsied, and passed on.

The Officer (his dress and deportment bespoke him of rank) turned round to follow her with his eyes, just as a servant entered with lights. But before they reached the stranger, a sudden exclamation of surprise burst from the lips of Mademoiselle de Cordet, which drew upon her the united observation of the company. This was produced by the very unexpected and (to her) extraordinary appearance of the identical St. Julian himself in the person of De la Ville's companion and preserver!

Incomprehensible as this incident certainly was, yet no doubt could possibly remain of the fact.

At the sound of her voice, the Chevalier started from his musing posture, glanced a hasty look round the room, advanced to where she stood, and addressed her with a grace all his own.

Meanwhile the unhappy Countess, with trembling steps and a throbbing heart, at length got to the door by which her husband entered; and there,
with

with much difficulty, prevented herself from falling on the floor, by reclining against the side of a window in the passage, where either Charlotte's exclamation, or the voice of the Chevalier, seemed to have rooted her footsteps; for, on the opposite figure of the latter, her almost motionless eyeballs seemed particularly rivetted.

Charmed to find an opportunity, thus openly furnished, even by De la Ville himself, to clear up the mysterious circumstances in which St. Julian's resemblance to the Countess, and the story of Victorine's picture, were equally involved; Charlotte thought not, at the moment, of any other object than the probable gratification that might now be procured, relative to incidents hitherto beyond their ability to develop, though so highly interesting to every mutual sensation of curiosity.

Entirely engaged by this reflection, she no longer recollected De la Ville's arrival, nor appeared sensible that any other person existed, than him to whom she was listening with avidity; and while thus attending to the explanation he gave of his late vicinity to the Convent, and the cause that, by retarding their journey, had prevented them from reaching the Castle sooner, though so near it (incidents no way connected with this history), she perceived not that Madame de Narbonne was

fainting, or that the rest of the company were too much occupied in observing her and the handsome stranger, to tender assistance where it was so materially necessary.

De la Ville, who in the meantime had been speaking to one of the domestics, now turned round on tiptoe, to discover what was become of his guest; and seeing him engaged in familiar conversation with Mademoiselle de Cordet, to whom he conceived him utterly unknown, stood for some moments suspended between surprise and curiosity, without opening his lips, or attending to the situation of Madame de Narbonne.

Louisa de Clermont was the first of the number who recollected this circumstance;—shocked to think it had so long remained unheeded, she now flew to offer her aid, emphatically exclaiming, “My dear Charlotte!” as she rushed past her cousin.

Charlotte started at the sound of reproach, and sprung after her to the fainting Countess.

“I am better,” said that lady in a low tremulous voice.—“Let me remain here for Heaven’s sake! tear me not, I beseech you, from this fascinating vision of imagination!—It will fade, perhaps, too quickly of itself. Alas! the same airy phantom

phantom has already frequently eluded my aching view !”

St. Julian, who had almost instantly followed the footsteps of Charlotte, now stood before the agitated Madame de Narbonne ; his arms were folded across his breast, and his whole appearance musingly pensive.

“ Who are you ?” demanded she, with a look of extreme emotion. Then attempting to push aside those who were assisting her, and repulsing their offered smelling bottles, “ Let me gaze on him once more !” she wildly added.—“ Let me take another last farewell view, ere Marat, the bloody Marat ! comes to separate us for ever !”

“ Ah ha !” exclaimed De la Ville, advancing, as he spoke, with the air of a person who thinks he has reason to plume himself on the possession of superior penetration, “ the mystery is, I find, explained ; the case is obvious : Madame apprehends I am in danger from Marat’s machinations. The suddenness of my unexpected return has thus affected her ; and she mistakes the Chevalier for that Member of the National Assembly.”

Charlotte turned her expressive eyes full upon him, and favoured the profound discoverer with one of her most significant looks..

Fearful, however, that some unconscious expression of Madame de Narbonne's might betray what was not proper at present to be revealed, she exerted her utmost eloquence to prevail upon her to retire; and at length, by dint of perseverance and soothing, accomplished this material object; but not before the Countess, languid, faint, and exhausted, was nearly become insensible to all around her.

Mademoiselle de Clermont assisted her cousin in supporting Madame to her own apartment. Charlotte then whispered her to return and keep De la Ville in conversation, that he might not have leisure to intrude upon them. After which, having locked the door, she seated herself on the side of the bed, where the Countess had permitted them to place her.

This mournful silence was first broken by herself. After a considerable pause, she heaved a deep sigh, and feebly enquired if the form she had seen was real, or merely the fancy-drawn image of a distempered brain?

Charlotte returned an evasive answer, which the other thought implied a suspicion of insanity.

"I am not now mad," cried the Countess, raising herself on her elbow, and looking steadily at her companion.

companion.—“Would to Heaven I were, and then another bitter disappointment would be spared me! for sure as I exist, the figure of my ever-lamented St. Hypolite recently stood before me!—Such was his manly, graceful form; so vibrated his once melodious voice on my ear; and so appeared the quick fleeting phantom that formerly accosted me on my way from the recess!—Oh Charlotte!” continued she, laying her pale, cold hand on Mademoiselle de Cordet’s—“Oh dearest Charlotte, explain this mysterious enigma—for Heaven’s sake, explain it!—I cannot longer be thus tortured by suspense!—Who then is this stranger?—You surely know him; for so your exclamation, and his subsequent conduct, plainly indicated. Tell me then ——”

“Be composed, my dearest Madam,” interrupted Charlotte, “I will tell you all I know; but even that all nearly amounts to nothing, at least nothing further than what you are already acquainted with.”

She then informed the Countess that the young man who thus excited her curiosity, was the very St. Julian whom she had frequently heard mentioned; and, at the request of that lady,

once more recapitulated all that at different periods had been related of him. In pursuance of which occupation we shall now leave her, to enquire after those in the *salle à manger*.

CHAP. VIII.

“ Les fautes que j’ai faites, & qui m’ont donné des peines
“ infinies, ont de par complaisance, & pour me laisser aller
“ trop nonchalamment aux avis des autres. Rien n’est si
“ dangereux que la foiblesse, de quelque nature qu’elle
“ soit.”

ABBE MILLOT.

WHEN De la Ville became, by the fate of war, a prisoner to the Royalists, he was consigned over to the charge of some men whom he recollected to have been formerly in the Conventional interest, and once even violent in their attachment to Republicanism.

Change

Change of opinion, and consequent change of party, are nothing uncommon in times of civil commotion. Converts too are said to discharge the duties of their new situation with peculiar severity; and the treatment De la Ville experienced from his renegade colleagues, furnished him with some practical proofs of the truth of this observation.

Impatient under sufferings, which his own folly was often the means of increasing, he one day found an opportunity of entering a complaint against his jailers.

The Officer to whom this was made, directed St. Julian to enquire into the particulars of his usage; and if such as represented, to see it remedied.

St. Julian, whose heart was ever ready to assist the unfortunate, accepted the commission with alacrity. He found that facts were very little exaggerated, and that the prisoner had but too much reason to be dissatisfied with the hardships of his condition.

The Chevalier was not one of those considerate characters who supposed the unhappy were especially rejected by Providence, and therefore fit objects for their fellow-creatures to treat with additional opprobrium and indignity, when ill-temper, caprice, or a tyrannical disposition, with the ability to
indulge

indulge it, left them at liberty to get rid of their evil propensities, by the agreeable method of tormenting the wretched dependant beings that chance had thrown into their power; and who ought therefore to have enjoyed their protection, unexposed to the insolence of office, or the frown of unnecessary authority.

No! St. Julian looked upon every son of adversity as his brother; and formed his criterion of their claims on his humanity, not by what perhaps they might deserve, but by what they suffered. Truth, however, obliges us to declare that, to the discredit of the Chevalier's penetration, he was often egregiously deceived on these occasions, and secretly felt the mortifying conviction that *good* did not, like *evil*, always recoil upon itself; nevertheless as he uniformly cherished the humane axiom, that it is better to be imposed upon by ten bad people, than a single virtuous character should be sacrificed to too much precaution, this young man foolishly continued to follow the dictates of an upright conscience;—satisfied with its approbation, he left the discriminating task of separating the chaff from the grain to the Ruler of the Universe, who, having formed the hearts of men, was best able to fathom the depth of their internal and different degrees of merit.

With

With a mind thus tuned to the finer susceptibilities of humanity, it may easily be imagined that no second petition for redress was ever presented to St. Julian, if the first happened to be within his power to accomplish. De la Ville's causes for complaint were therefore speedily removed—the more speedily perhaps, on discovering him to be actually Lord of Narbonne; for we have formerly shewn he had repeatedly evinced a very unaccountable predilection for every thing connected with the Countess of that place, and her fair companion, Charlotte de Cordet.

But however he might wish to lighten the heavy burden of captivity, or pour wine and oil on the wounded spirit of affliction, yet, beyond the boundary of what was *strictly right*, it is not probable he would have gone far in the prisoner's behalf; because till then, though personally unacquainted with De la Ville, he had ever entertained a sovereign contempt for his whole conduct and actions.

But, as it often happens even in less irritable periods, when the dæmon of civil discord is not at hand to throw the false colouring of envy, hatred, or revenge over the most indifferent transactions, that the wisest and best of men are not always particularly indebted to the impartiality of their Biographers;

no wonder if the shade should chance to be somewhat heightened, and the figure drawn a little beyond its usual magnitude, when such a painter is at liberty to portray it according to the tenor of his own distorted imagination.

Possibly this might have been the case in the present instance; at least St. Julian would gladly have persuaded himself it was so. Yet though abundantly eager to make the prisoner's situation comfortable, and to render him every service in his power, he was nevertheless frequently obliged to acknowledge there was nothing congenial in their principles, sentiments, or dispositions.

Notwithstanding this conviction, however, a temporary change for the better had certainly taken place in De la Ville's behaviour. The stern severity, too often incident to such a state of confinement, had, in some measure, subdued that share of vanity which he possessed in so copious a degree; and his mind was at least humbled, if not radically cured of its natural distemper.

Under existing circumstances he enjoyed sufficient leisure to muse upon the striking contrast so conspicuously displayed between the treatment now experienced, and what he had lately met with from those with whom he once associated on terms of political equality, and from whom he therefore
conceived

conceived himself entitled to more consideration, were it only for the sake of old fellowship, and former similarity of opinion.

The parallel drawn on this occasion was far from being favourable to the new-converted Patriots, while it exhibited the proceedings of their Royalist colleagues in a much more amiable point of view.

Ever theameleon of the moment, and ready to assume the hue of those who, by the aid of superior abilities, or the instigations of self-interest, were disposed to acquire an ascendancy over him, De la Ville now began to think the old regimen not quite so bad as his late Republican friends in Paris had chosen to represent it.

The sudden change, from a state of insult and degradation, to one of comparative happiness, induced him to look upon the agent of it in a partial light; and this naturally inspired a wish to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of one who appeared master of his fate. Prepossessed with this idea, he found it was for his own advantage to please St. Julian; and of course endeavoured to obtain his suffrage by that insinuating plausibility of manner by which a man of real honour is sometimes apt to be duped.

St. Julian, unsuspicious himself, because superior to the meanness of duplicity, and free from all intentional imposition, certainly gave his captive credit for more than he possessed ; but the latitude allowed him on the score of merit was principally confined to the negative article of *weak good nature* ; for the flimzy texture of his qualifications on any other head, broke forth too often to make their genuine estimate difficult to ascertain.

Had the Chevalier seen the little despot, where unlimited authority gave the *real* traits of his character room to exhibit him as the tyrant of all who were necessitated to crouch under his power, how very different would then have been his sentiments of the only virtue he imagined it possible to assign him ? But De la Ville, though utterly void of true wisdom, had nevertheless a tolerable portion of worldly cunning ; and he sometimes stumbled on opportunities of exercising it to advantage.

He was master of the Castle of Narbonne however, and husband to the woman for whose happiness, though unacquainted with her, St. Julian found himself unaccountably interested ; and therefore, however he might despise the general character of De la Ville, nay, what was still more strange, even feel a particular dislike to him from a knowledge

ledge of these very circumstances, he nevertheless determined to see him treated with justice, and some degree of that attention which he conceived was rather due to the rank he filled in society, than his own internal claims to distinction.

Colonel D'Alembert too, the Chevalier's commanding Officer, judged it prudent to encourage the growing partiality of their prisoner. Merely as an individual, he knew him to be insignificant and contemptible; but as the possessor of immense property in the neighbourhood of La Vendee, his influence might prove serviceable, and was not to be despised.

The finances of the Royalist army, in spite of their late advantages, were, at this period, reduced to a very low ebb; and in addition to the difficulties arising from this circumstance, there appeared reason to suppose an attack on the side of the Republicans was at no great distance. Thus situated, a recruit of money and arms was peculiarly desirable; and De la Ville, if properly managed, might be useful in both respects. Nothing was consequently to be neglected, that could possibly contribute to the chance of securing him in their interest; and, on their success in this point, they had sufficient cause, it was imagined, to congratulate themselves.

The

The demand made for his ransom, may be conceived ill calculated, from its magnitude, to produce this effect, after the circumstance of his liberation was fully ascertained. But even in this instance, the hand of a superior artist was conspicuously displayed; for De la Ville was taught to believe that the large sum required for that end, was only proportionable to his rank in life, which would be lessened in the eye of the world were a smaller one asked for his freedom, than was commonly taken on similar occasions.

The mode of proceeding latterly observed in regard to the Lord of Narbonne, had again revived the half-dormant embers of that vanity which received so severe a check during the early part of his captivity; and therefore conceiving himself once more the great man, he easily fell into the snare laid for him: and not only acceded with cheerfulness to the terms of the proposed ransom, but even made a voluntary offer of a much larger contribution, with all the inherent ostentation of his natural character.

This matter being finally adjusted to the apparent satisfaction of both parties, St. Julian himself, with a chosen band, was directed to escort him in safety to Narbonne; and at the same time received private instructions to prolong his own abode

abode there, under various pretences, that leisure might be obtained by that means to secure the interest De la Ville already professed to feel for his new-adopted friends.

Before they reached the place of their destination, however, in a deep and gloomy glen through which they were obliged to pass, this small body of men was attacked by a superior number of armed ruffians, whose principal fury, evidently levelled at the late emancipated prisoner, must soon have proved decisive, had he been less gallantly defended. Each party fought with every appearance of desperate valour for some time. Two of the banditti were already stretched on the ground:—he who seemed to be their chief, enraged to see the conflict so long undetermined, suddenly rushed forward, and aimed a stroke at De la Ville's breast, which must indubitably have finished his mortal career, had not St. Julian sprung before the intended victim, and prevented its effects by stabbing the assailant through the heart; who, heaving a hollow groan, dropped at their feet, and uttering a horrid, though half-pronounced imprecation on his conqueror, instantly expired.

The remainder of the band, thrown into confusion by the loss of their leader, and many of them being dangerously wounded, were now with little difficulty

culty dispersed;—after a faint, and ill-conducted resistance, they retreated; and their opponents, apprehensive of ambuscades in so suspicious a place, judged it more prudent to proceed on their way with caution, than run the risk of incurring any sudden surprise by a pursuit of the fugitives, particularly as their number was somewhat reduced in the recent contest by the death of three of the escort.

If ever De la Ville possessed any good qualities, (and who is there without some?) they were now warmed into action. The proofs he had received of protection and friendship were too obvious to be equivocal. Would he have met with such from his former associates? Their insulting treatment of him in the hour of adversity and trial, sufficiently answered this question in the negative.

De la Ville at one time would have said they were corrupted by joining the Royalists; but De la Ville now saw things through a different medium; and the shades of the rainbow had, some way or other, he scarcely knew how, changed to a pure white. Thus the weak, the selfish, and the vain are ever governed by the colour of the predominant circumstance; and thus

Enterprises of great pith and moment

—Lose the name of action, &c. &c.

Having

Having now endeavoured to account for De la Ville's dereliction of principle, or rather conduct, (for it still remains a doubtful case what portion of the former was ever in his possession), we shall next attempt to explain the secret springs of some other events, not totally unconnected with the foregoing pages of this history.

CHAP. IX.

“ Oh shame to men ! devil with devil damn'd

“ Firm concord holds ; men only disagree,

“ Of creatures rational.”

MILTON.

THOUGH in the last engagement with the Royalists, Auffin Marat had shared the fate of his now quondam friend De la Ville, and become a prisoner, he had nevertheless fallen upon means to effect his escape, not long before the liberation of the latter was accomplished.

Having attained this desirable object, he instantly repaired to his uncle in Paris, and acquainted him with all that had come within the circle of his

knowledge during the period of captivity. Amongst other things, he mentioned the great probability of De la Ville ending his life in a prison, as not the least welcome piece of information.

Indeed in the communication of this idea, he happened to be partly justified by concurrent circumstances; for De la Ville was reported to be in the last stage of the epidemical distemper then raging in the camp, and quarters of their conqueror.

In pursuance of the scheme this expected incident opened to their contemplation, Austin had advised the elder Marat to seize opportunity by the forelock, and obtain possession of his widow, by virtue of the national decree for that purpose, before any interloper would again have time to step in between him and the golden prize.

But the elder Marat had now other business to employ his thoughts. For though De la Ville's friends, in the National Assembly, could no longer reasonably object against his being their relation's successor at Narbonne, when that relation was supposed to be finally consigned to the grave; yet political considerations of a very powerful nature, absolutely prohibited every possible supposition of then quitting Paris on any account whatever.

Unwilling,

Unwilling, however, to lose those incalculable advantages which Fortune, with an open hand, seemed ready to offer for his acceptance, after much mature reflection, it was at length agreed to place a spy on De la Ville's situation. If informed by this means of his final exit, well and good; but should an unexpected recovery, or a release from confinement, be at last effected—why then, even in that case, there might perhaps be means found to become his heir, without the sanction of legal authority for the purpose.

Shortly after the conclusion of this secret arrangement, private intelligence was received of the intended exchange of prisoners, and De la Ville's existence in a convalescent state.

A little expert Generalship now seemed to be their only resource. It was therefore determined upon, and their emissaries instructed how to conduct it.

If the consequence resulting from this resolution should happen to be the murder of De la Ville on his journey to Narbonne, why the Royalists must answer for it, and bear the stigma of an action so atrocious as that of assassinating an exchanged Republican almost on the confines of their own camp. Marat knew they had been censured for crimes of a deeper die with as little foundation;

and therefore this was considered as but a trifling addition to the number. The plan was so contrived, that Austin would make his public appearance in Paris at the very time when the transaction took place, so that no blame could attach to him on the occasion:—and moreover, if successful, he received a promise from his uncle of sharing in the emoluments thus to be acquired at Narbonne.

These necessary preliminaries properly adjusted, and suitable instruments procured for the execution of the design, Marat, and his no less worthy associate, waited with anxious impatience for the conclusion of the scene.

This scheme, however, formed and digested in a manner that did honour to its sanguinary projectors, was nevertheless, as we have related, rendered abortive by the steady valour and superior conduct of St. Julian and his well-chosen band. And the consequence resulting from their success was even more detrimental to the views of their opponents, than that of any common conflict, since it served to prejudice De la Ville still more strongly in favour of his new-formed connections. And thus, according to the poet,

“ Evil was made to recoil upon itself.”

Disappointed

Disappointed and chagrined by the short unsatisfactory accounts she had only hitherto been able to procure of St. Julian's history, the Countess de Narbonne felt a restless impulsive inclination to make that enquiry at the fountain head, in which she had so frequently failed through the medium of second-hand intelligence. A motive she still knew not how to define—a curiosity ever inexplicable to herself, continually pressed on her mind for this gratification.

She silently mused over Mademoiselle de Cordet's last discourse on the subject : and during that period became more and more interested in the discovery of a fate, which, from the few traits already collected of it, was ever evidently enveloped in the deepest obscurity. To pierce through this dark veil seemed now impossible, unless by his own assistance, and to that she eagerly wished to have recourse ; yet on cooler reflection, something like a sensation of shame tinged her pale cheek at the idea of indulging a propensity to investigation, which certainly appeared to herself trifling and censurable ; while, in the eyes of others, she felt perfectly conscious such a proceeding must unavoidably convey the impression of a childish, or even worse inclination—charges which she was extremely averse to incur, and which nothing but

an ardent desire to obtain information on this topic could possibly have prevailed on her feelings to encounter.

“ But in fact what could she have, after all, to indemnify herself for thus drawing the judgment of the world on her conduct? Was not the husband of her choice long since numbered with the dead, and the only pledge of their affection deposited in its watery grave? Why then this restless, this perpetual anxiety about the affairs of a stranger? Why let an accidental resemblance (circumstances similar to which have often been known to occur in nations totally separated from each other) torture her bosom with—with what? Hope! that baseless flatterer of the wretched! Ah no! It was not for her to give way to its suggestions! Despair had too long usurped its residence in her bosom, to admit the deceiver again as an inmate.”

“ And yet, good Heavens!” cried she, with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, “ how strong, how striking a likeness he nevertheless bears to those features, to that figure, whose image ever floats before my view! Can these appearances be really only the effusions of fancy? Can the emotions they occasion in this care-worn heart proceed alone from imaginary or indifferent causes? Oh gracious Providence! allay this tumult of the mind,
or

or grant me the satisfaction of an explanation so material to my tranquillity! Assist me how to proceed, for I am bewildered in the mazes of a dark and inexplicable labyrinth."

Unable immediately to obtain sufficient fortitude for another interview, she desired Charlotte would accompany her on the following morning to the rock.

Though an early riser, Victorine was not yet visible on their arrival; and they learned from Agnes, with infinite regret, that this circumstance was owing to a sudden indisposition, with which she had been seized soon after their departure on the preceding evening.

In half an hour's time, however, they were admitted to her apartment.

She seemed employed in searching for something that had dropped from her pillow, but declined any offered assistance on the occasion.

When the ladies expressed their sorrow for her illness, and anxiously enquired into the nature of it, a deep crimson overspread her face and neck. She hesitated in her answer, and exhibited symptoms of confusion too obvious to escape the observation of her guests, who, remarking that their attention pained her, changed the subject, though not without experiencing much solicitude to dis-

cover the cause of such unusual appearances. In the meantime they could not help remarking that her eyes, half suffused in tears, were continually occupied in pursuit of their former object.

At length seeming to recollect herself, she apologized for detaining them so long in her bedroom, and requested they would walk into the other apartment. As Charlotte turned round to follow the Countess, she perceived something on the floor, near the chair on which the latter had been seated. It was a large hair ring; and as she stooped to lift it, Victorine sprung forward with rapidity, and snatched it up. The Countess stepped aside, regarding her with astonishment; Charlotte likewise surveyed her with a look of surprise, that was too expressive to pass unnoticed by the daughter of Joseph. Her colour changed, she caught hold of Mademoiselle de Cordet's hand, and bursting into a flood of tears, in broken, incoherent language, entreated them to bear with her weakened spirits, and excuse the present apparent inconsistencies of a heart, with every secret of which they were entitled to be acquainted, and which should consequently be honestly laid open to their view.

Apprehensive that some recent misfortune had befallen her, Madame de Narbonne eagerly waited

waited for a confirmation or removal of those apprehensions which now seized her mind.

The first thought that naturally occurred to her imagination, was a dread that some inattention of Victorine's had furnished room for suspicion to glance on the particular place of her concealment; and she was the readier to adopt this idea, from a knowledge of De la Ville's escort having passed in the vicinity of the rock on the foregoing evening.

When Victorine's agitation produced a flood of tears, she had thrown herself on a chair, and for a few moments had given way to the secret anguish that wrung her heart; but soon recollecting that her friends were standing in expectation of accompanying her to another chamber, she started up, uncovered her face, and advancing to the door, opened it for them. They entered, and seated themselves round a table, on which lay a great variety of fine work, some implements for drawing, and several other little articles of amusement.

In the design of giving her leisure to compose herself, the ladies pretended to be examining these things, and mutually admiring the taste and execution of the whole as they lay spread before them. During this occupation a cambric handkerchief was swept, unintentionally, by the train of Madame de

Narbonne's robe, from a marble stand, in a corner of the room behind them. Neither the Countess nor Victorine discovered this accident;—Charlotte, however, from her situation, unavoidably saw it; and was preparing to replace the handkerchief, when a small, but beautiful bust, of a composition resembling the finest marble, with the different apparatus necessary for its execution, stood displayed on the spot from whence the covering was removed. The back part of this inanimate figure was towards her, but she thought the character of the head not unknown:—curiosity operated; she softly turned it round, and the perfect image of St. Julian was presented to her view! Doubt now was at an end.—This discovery proved a confirmation of the former suspicion created by the picture in the Chevalier's possession. It was evident these young people were acquainted with each other—nay there even appeared sufficient foundation to conclude a mutual attachment actually might be inferred from such concurrent testimonies of its existence.

Ignorant, however, in what manner this disclosure might operate, and still willing to explore her way a little farther before she ventured to mention it, Charlotte hastily threw the handkerchief into its former position, by which means she con-

cealed her knowledge of this proof of Victorine's attachment and ingenuity from observation; and afterwards immediately stepped to the table, where the Countess and her *protégée* were closely engaged in conversation.

It sometimes happens that in our anxiety to escape from one evil, we stumble upon a greater. Thus it was with Victorine:—her eagerness to remove from the bedchamber, previous to the recovery of the ring (which she wished to preserve from their notice), had accelerated an event more explicitly conclusive than it could possibly have led to; at a period too when she conceived herself taking the surest method to prevent a similar disaster.

But though Victorine was now more composed, and better able to discourse than on their first arrival, she no longer appeared to recollect her recent promise, or rather offer, of communicating the cause of her distress; and her friends were too delicate to press a subject, which it was evident she studiously avoided. Absent, pensive, and thoughtful, she repeatedly fell into deep reveries; and again starting from them, seemed abashed, vexed, and disconcerted at a behaviour so strange and unusual. Before this scene proved of much longer continuance, Agnes entered, and informed the Countess

she was wanted at Margaretta's cottage, where the latter wished to consult her on some of the alterations formerly ordered to be completed in the private passage from thence to the rock.

Previous to their departure, Victorine seemed several times on the point of asking some question; but her lips opened to speak without uttering a syllable; and she saw them rise to leave the chamber with such a look of regret, that Charlotte offered to return again as soon as the Countess would permit.

This proposition was acceded to with faltering avidity; and Madame being conducted to the house of her faithful Margaretta, Mademoiselle de Cordet immediately rejoined Victorine.

Young people often feel a reluctance to enter upon explanations of a certain description with those more advanced in years, particularly if accustomed to look up to them with respect, and any uncommon degree of veneration. The Countess knew that Victorine regarded her in this light; and she was likewise acquainted with the favourable opinion her *protégée* entertained of Charlotte. That something more than usual occupied the mind of the former was evident; but it was also evident that she seemed unwilling to mention the cause of it in her presence. From the intimate footing she

was now on with Mademoiselle de Cordet, it appeared probable the secret that distressed her might be entrusted to Charlotte as nearer her own age; and prepossessed with this idea, the Countess enjoined the latter to exert her influence for obtaining the discovery.

Madame de Narbonne, on finding Victorine's complaint was principally on her spirits, had assumed an appearance of serenity far from the interior situation of her mind, and endeavoured to speak on indifferent topics, while her own heart was wrung with accumulated sorrows. The exertion she had therefore recently made, failed her soon after entering the cottage; and in the middle of a discourse with Bertram and her nurse, she suddenly burst into tears, rushed into the apartment appropriated to her own use, and throwing herself upon the sofa, sobbed aloud.

Margaretta knew not yet of De la Ville's return. She had not been at the Castle on the preceding night; and the Countess found herself at first unable to mention his name, till it became necessary to do so in the course of their conversation. It proved therefore, at this period, that Madame's feelings prevented her from proceeding; and it was not till after some time elapsed, that she attained sufficient

sufficient composure to acquaint these faithful people with the painful circumstance of his unwished-for arrival.

Many requisite affairs relative to the rock had already been arranged from the juncture of their being made acquainted with De la Ville's existence; but as his re-appearance at the Castle took place at an earlier period than had been conceived possible, much still remained to be done in several of the inferior departments, where a sudden overflowing of the river had damaged some of the secret passages on the cottage side of the recess. It was consequently to receive her directions on this subject, that her presence had been requested there; where we will now leave her, and return to the apartment of Victorine.

CHAP. X.

- “ The low insect, lurking in the grass,
“ And the imperial eagle, which aloft
“ Ploughs the ethereal plain, are both alike
“ In the Eternal Eye. Mortals are equal :
“ It is not birth, magnificence, or power,
“ But *virtue only* makes the diff’rence ’twixt them.”

MILLER.

CHARLOTTE had long known that Victorine was an adept in all the fashionable accomplishments of her sex ; and in particular had frequently admired her performance in plaister of Paris. Many elegant productions of this kind ornamented her abode ; amongst the number of
which,

which, a bust of the Countess, and another of herself, were not the least conspicuous for their exquisite workmanship. A thought therefore struck her, that a conversation might easily be introduced on this subject, from whence it would perhaps be possible to draw some intelligence of a more interesting nature.

On this occasion an accidental occurrence saved her much circumlocution, and brought matters to a speedier *eclaircissement* than, on first broaching the topic, she durst venture to hope for.

The door of the small room, where the cage with Victorine's favourite bird usually hung through the day, happened to be standing ajar. As the little creature was commonly left at liberty to quit its gilded residence, or remain in it at pleasure, it chose the former at present; and, unperceived by either of the ladies, entered their apartment, where, having hopped round one side of the table, it suddenly perched upon the cambric handkerchief on the marble stand, and overturned some of the things concealed under it.

Victorine gave a scream, sprung forward, and in her anxiety to preserve the favourite bust from destruction, forgot she had a spectator in the room. The bird was frightened; its talons got entangled in the handkerchief, and before she could disengage them,

them, St. Julian's representative stood once more exposed to view.

Charlotte, who had risen to assist her, pretended to be surprised at the discovery; and with well-feigned astonishment, suddenly exclaimed—"Good God! from whence came this?—How in the world have *you* procured a bust of my friend St. Julian?"

The bird, the bust, the cambric handkerchief, were now unheeded: the latter dropped from Victorine's fingers as she turned hastily round, and fixed her eyes upon Charlotte. In the following moment she threw her arms about her neck, and bursting into a flood of tears, exclaimed—"Your friend! Is St. Julian then known to you? Gracious Providence, what do I hear? Oh my dear, dear Charlotte!"

Thus she continued in broken, inarticulate sentences to ask, and receive answers, till Mademoiselle de Cordet at length prevailed upon her to be more composed; and the two friends, gradually confiding the extent of their knowledge to each other, Charlotte soon learned the following particulars.

"At a *ci-devant* Nobleman's house in Paris, where Victorine frequently carried secret messages from her Royal aunt, under pretence of visiting the young

young ladies of the family, she first saw the original of her bust. Entrusted by Charette with verbal communications of the most important nature, St. Julian failed not to give mutual satisfaction to his employers, and fully justified the confidence reposed in his honour. It was therefore not surprising that, in the course of these transactions, he should become a general favourite with those so intimately acquainted with his merit, and in consequence of this knowledge, receive many unequivocal marks of esteem and approbation.

The birth of Victorine, hitherto carefully concealed from public knowledge, appeared to be as much involved in mystery as his own; and therefore the congeniality of sentiment which each soon became sensible of entertaining for the other, received no early check from a supposed inequality of station, or the adventitious circumstance of her claims on a Royal parentage.

In short, a warm and mutual attachment between these two young people proved the consequence of their frequent interviews at the Marquis de Montcalm's. But this Nobleman was too well acquainted with her Majesty's partiality for her *protégée*, not to judge it expedient to inform her of the circumstance, nearly as soon as it fell under his own observation. And though, in the course of the communication,

communication, all due justice was done to the superior idea entertained of the Chevalier's character and principles, the Queen professed herself extremely displeased on the occasion, and peremptorily forbade Victorine to hold any farther intercourse with him; on which account she was henceforth prohibited from appearing at the house of the Marquis, and no longer employed as her Majesty's confidential emissary in that quarter.

Hard as this sentence seemed to the weeping Victorine, implicit obedience was, nevertheless, paid to it; and from that period she saw no more of St. Julian for some time.

During the massacre of the Swiss Guards, on the dreadful 10th of August, when their brutal assassins threatened to murder every person before them, and were repeatedly on the point of putting their menaces in execution on the devoted heads of the Royal Family; the Queen, expecting them to burst in upon her every moment, in an agony of mind that scarcely left her sensible of what she was doing, had locked poor Victorine in a private closet belonging to her own room, from whence (in the suddenness of their flight to the National Assembly) there either happened to be no time left for her release, or her situation was entirely forgotten in
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the confusion and perturbation that marked the horrors of the period.

The place of her confinement was at some distance from the principal scene of action ; and on the departure of the ferocious assailants from the Palace, it still remained undiscovered.

In this comfortless state she continued two dreary days. Afraid to call for assistance, lest immediate destruction should be the consequence, and totally ignorant of all that had passed, or might still be passing in her vicinity, the final lot of mortality seemed only averted in one shape to approach in another, not less formidable. Ghastly famine, with all its concomitant terrors, began to present itself before her ; and death, in its most lingering form, apparently advanced to close her miserable existence. She concluded her fate now inevitable ; and the sole consolation that remained was a guiltless conscience, with the reflection of having hitherto escaped any of those personal indignities to which several of the unhappy females in the Palace had been subjected. While returning thanks to Providence for preserving her from suffering greater evils than those she already experienced, the sound of approaching steps, as the second night of her confinement was nearly over, reached her. Terrified that some of her
causes

causes for gratitude to Heaven were drawing to a conclusion, and overcome by fasting, apprehension, and anxiety, she fell senseless on the floor.

Of the precise time she remained in this state, Victorine was ignorant; but on recovering her mental faculties, she found herself in a place to which she was totally a stranger, and attended by two decent looking women whom she had never before seen.

In answer to her eager enquiries for satisfaction on a change of circumstance so apparently unaccountable, she was informed that immediately upon recalling her situation to remembrance, the Queen had contrived to acquaint M. de Montcalm with her solicitude for Victorine's liberation and safety; at the same time mentioning the place of her confinement, and entreating his assistance in her behalf.

St. Julian happened again to be with that Nobleman when this intelligence and request reached him; an accident discovered the purport of both to the Chevalier, who, with all the impetuosity of youth, and anxiety of real attachment, represented the urgency of the case, and the absolute necessity of making an instant attempt to obey the Queen, lest the object of her care should suffer by procrastination.

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He added the most ardent entreaties for permission to attend the Marquis on this occasion; and solemnly assured him that no advantage whatever should be taken of existing circumstances, to act in opposition to what he knew was her Majesty's pleasure respecting Victorine.

M. de Montcalm had the most perfect reliance on the Chevalier's honour, and knew him incapable of deviating in the smallest degree from his word. He was therefore prevailed upon to accept of his proffered aid; and after no little trouble, difficulty, and danger, at length accomplished their undertaking.

Victorine, unconscious of all that was passing around her, was conveyed to a place of safety; and St. Julian, having lingered under the same roof till she began to give indications of convalescence, immediately retired, in compliance with the promise made to M. de Montcalm, and the line of conduct he was predetermined to observe.

Whether in consequence of the Queen's further directions, or by the sole authority of the Marquis alone, is uncertain; but Victorine was removed on the following night to another situation, probably with a view to her greater security. This idea, however, if entertained, proved miserably erroneous,
and

and ended, as we have seen, in her imprisonment in the Abbaye.

With the particulars of that transaction Victorine still remained unacquainted; all she recollected of the matter was the appalling sound of a barbarous multitude heard from the street: she had long become insensible before her place of residence shared the fate of several other houses in the vicinity, which were burnt to the ground, amidst shouts of savage triumph, and scenes of the most horrid description.

Of the means by which she was rescued from this dreadful state, and afterwards carried to the Abbaye, she could likewise give no account. The succeeding incidents of her life have already been related.

From that period nearly to the present, no intelligence whatever had reached her of St. Julian. But on the preceding evening, about the time she usually went to her devotions, passing one of the windows in the gallery leading to the other side of the rock, her eye caught a transient glance of something that flashed with brightness against the casement.

Knowing that she could see without being seen, from her present situation, she ventured nearer,
and

and speedily perceived an armed band of men on the road, that wound in that direction to the Castle.

Startled at the discovery, and eager to find whether they were to be considered in a friendly light or otherwise, she felt herself more and more interested in the enquiry; and the bright rays of a setting sun aiding this inclination, enabled her to mark their steps with some degree of precision, as, partially emerging from groves of detached plantations, they advanced to the more impervious shades of the forest.

One of the party stopped for a moment to speak to a soldier, who hastily approached him, and seemed to point towards the Convent with a perturbed air and violent gesticulation of manner.

He who appeared to be the Chief instantly followed the other, while the remainder of the band, apparently fatigued, placed themselves against some of the trees, and resting their arms on the muzzles of their firelocks, evidently waited his return.

Increasing curiosity tempted Victorine to continue her observations; and in a short time the Officer, accompanied by several additional men, appeared again in sight.

Turning

Turning an angle of the road, Victorine saw them now much nearer than on their first appearance.

But conceive her astonishment when *he*, who had principally attracted her notice, at this instant removing his helmet to adjust the finest head of hair she had ever seen, was perceived to be St. Julian! the long-lost, but ever tenderly remembered St. Julian! whose image was too indelibly impressed on her memory to be mistaken, under whatever circumstances it presented itself to view!!

The violent palpitation of her heart scarcely permitted her to breathe! She kept her eyes, however, fixed upon him, as if apprehensive the pleasing vision would speedily fleet from their ardent gaze. The power of indulgence was indeed of short duration; the object of her attention soon replaced his helmet, and as the white nodding plume bent over its shining sides, half shading the form of a manly and well-proportioned forehead, she saw him take something about the size of a small picture from his breast, which he seemed to regard with much attention. In a few moments it was pressed to his lips—to his heart! again he ardently gazed at it! and then hastily returning it to his bosom, he commanded his followers to advance; suddenly struck into the forest; joined those who

apparently waited for him, and the whole party soon became no longer visible !

— Heedless of every thing except the circumstance which had thus unexpectedly occurred, Victorine remained transfixed on the spot from whence it was observed, inattentive to the gradual lapse of time, or the effects of a heavy shower that drove against the open casement, and reached her as she stood before it. The picture, the *imaged* picture ! like Othello's handkerchief, conjured up a thousand painful surmises !—"It could not be her's ! she had never given him such a thing !" — The idea of a rival ran with a cold chill sensation through her veins ; — she sickened at the supposition ; and continuing unable to move from the window against which she supported herself, was found in this state by Agnes on her return from a temporary visit to the Convent. This faithful friend and attendant, alarmed at the discovery of her situation, immediately prevailed upon her to swallow some drops, and retire to her own apartment.

Victorine objected to nothing, but permitted her damp cloaths to be changed without uttering a single syllable ; she was then conducted to a couch, where a deep sigh once or twice burst from her heart. Agnes, having administered a few more drops, however, had soon the happiness to see
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the beneficial effects that followed her prescription ; and her beloved mistress found herself so much relieved, that in about an hour's time she was able to give some account of the foregoing occurrences, without mentioning any thing relative to St. Julian or herself, farther than was absolutely necessary ; after which she eagerly enquired, if she had encountered any of the party, or could give the smallest information respecting their appearance in that quarter.

Agnes, whose first attention had entirely been engrossed by the condition in which she found Victorine, now somewhat relieved from her recent apprehensions on that account, immediately mentioned the incident that had taken place at the Convent, which, it seems, was owing to some new-raised recruits who had previously joined De la Ville's escort ; but having, either by chance, or design, fallen behind ; had taken that opportunity to alarm the Sisterhood by their conduct at the gates, where they were prevented from committing any outrage by the speed of an orderly serjeant, who flew to overtake, and acquaint his Commander with the obvious nature of their intentions. The Chevalier, she added, instantly returned with the messenger, and almost as instantly removed every cause of alarm, by the prudent measures adopted for that purpose.

“The Chevalier!” repeated Victorine, as the speaker concluded her intelligence.—“What Chevalier? Do you know his name?”

Agnes acknowledged she was unacquainted with that circumstance, and Victorine fell again into a silent reverie.

Thus were matters situated when the Countess and her companion repaired to the rock.

More than ever at a loss in what manner to proceed in this business, Charlotte knew not whether or no to mention the circumstance of St. Julian's residence at the Castle; and, though ultimately convinced of the propriety of concealing it at this present juncture, till she reconsidered the whole a little better, the secret had nearly escaped her lips several times before they separated.

When Charlotte rejoined the Countess at the cottage, she found her unfortunate friend still much indisposed; but anxiously waiting her arrival, in expectation of learning something relative to the cause of Victorine's emotion, which it was evident the latter did not wish to explain in her presence.

Though Victorine had mentioned her fears of Madame de Narbonne's disapprobation, she did not prohibit Charlotte from speaking on the subject to that lady; on the contrary, it was left entirely

entirely to her own discretion to name it or not, as events occurred to justify the disclosure.

Mademoiselle de Cordet was still desirous, however, of having the mystery first cleared up that enveloped the fate of St. Julian; and therefore gave the Countess a detail as near the truth as possible, without introducing the Chevalier as the person for whom Victorine expressed a predilection.

Topics of this description generally recalled past transactions, in which she was herself more immediately interested, to the mind of the Countess. Charlotte perceived such was the effect of her present communication; and the compassionate voice of friendship endeavoured to sooth, where reason might indeed silence, but could not vanquish the feelings of a heart long accustomed to dwell on the total overthrow of every worldly enjoyment, to which it was once most fondly attached.

Short as was the period since De la Ville's return, the agitation of her mind, during the preceding night and this forenoon, had been sufficiently powerful to bring on the former symptoms of a declining constitution, which of late had rather proved stationary than progressive. Her whole nervous system was, in fact, so miserably shattered, that the smallest flutter or surprise usually was attended with that effect. No wonder, then, if an

event so little expected, or desired, as De la Ville's re-appearance at the Castle, after an absence so prolonged, and a silence so impenetrable on every circumstance relative to his fate, as seemed to imply its decisive termination, should shock and disappoint those prospects that latterly began to open on her view, and consequently affect her feelings, her health, and her spirits in no common degree.

CHAP. XI.

“ At length the day is come

“ When this proud idol of the *people's* hearts

“ Shall now *by all* be worshipp'd.”

JONES.

THE sudden return of De la Ville, and its consequent effect on the mind of Madame de Narbonne, had prevented any interview taking place between her, M. de Clermont, and the other gentlemen, from the period of the conference held by the three latter in the Temple of Concord. Their enquiries had been answered by one of the domestics, in the manner usually directed by the Countess, when she chose to spend some time at

the rock—" *Madame is at present indisposed, and wishes to be alone.*"—To the additional question of "Where then is Mademoiselle de Cordet?" they were told she accompanied the Countess.

Obliged to rest satisfied with this intelligence, they restrained their impatience for an interview till the morning was far advanced. At length, alarmed at receiving no message from the Countess or her friend, and convinced the occurrences of the period would sensibly affect the ill-fated wife of De la Ville, M. de Clermont interrogated Agathe on the subject, and from her learned the real state of the case. In consequence of this information it was agreed, that he and Montague should await their return in the forest, while Mr. Hastings remained at the Castle to amuse its master and his guest, so that no sudden interruption might be apprehended from so material a quarter, without previous notice of its approach.

The two gentlemen having lingered a considerable time in the forest, without any appearance of those they expected, at last concluded the ladies must have returned by another road; and prepossessed with this idea, advanced to the cottage to ascertain the truth.

Here they were agreeably disappointed; and being immediately admitted to the Countess, proceeded.

ceeded to acquaint her with the measures they had adopted, in the supposition of any future emergency rendering such precautions necessary.

These principally consisted in a well-digested plan of escape to England, where Mr. Hastings offered to Madame's acceptance a secure and beautiful retreat, sufficient for the accommodation of herself and her friends, in the peaceful and romantic county of Cumberland.

The Countess felt a pang at the bare idea of quitting Narbonne, which her utmost endeavours to suppress could not accomplish; for the tomb of St. Hypolite must also be left—and left too, in all human probability, for ever!!

The anguish of the moment evaporated not, however, in words. She knew that a marked refusal could only serve to draw from her friends additional remonstrances, and more earnest solicitations, in order to procure her participation in a project, to which, merely on her own account, she was predetermined never to agree.

After a musing and melancholy pause of some minutes, she therefore acceded to the proposal in general terms, though privately resolved that others should solely benefit by the ultimate advantages to be derived from its successful execution.

As for considerations of a personal nature, her life had long become burdensome and oppressive; to close it near the cherished remains of him, on whom her thoughts perpetually dwelt, was the first wish of her heart; and the dangerous gratification of that wish she was determined to attempt, whatever sufferings or difficulties might be opposed to its final accomplishment.

Before the party returned to the Castle, a method was settled for securing, and conveying to England, a principal portion of the immense treasure concealed in the rock; and other arrangements fixed upon preparatory to any chance of fresh disasters taking place.

During the time previously spent by the two gentlemen in the forest, Montague had laid the state of his heart open to M. de Clermont, and requested his permission for an union with his niece. The proposition was received with pleasure, obtained his entire approbation, and, at Montague's particular desire, was now made known to the Countess; who likewise sanctioned it in the same manner, accompanied by the warmest expressions of esteem, and with tears in her eyes, emphatically declared her intention of henceforth considering Charlotte as her own child, and, in pecuniary matters, providing for her accordingly.

M. de

M. de Clermont undertook to acquaint her father with these circumstances, whose consent he had no doubt of obtaining; and Mr. Hastings, after being informed of what had passed at this conference, was then immediately to take proper measures for the reception of his friends in Cumberland.

When arrived near the Castle, the gentlemen struck into a different part of the forest, and the two ladies entered the gates alone.

The Countess, as usual, retired to her own apartments, and Charlotte repaired to the sitting room, where she found Mr. Hastings with a book in his hand, watching their return from one of the windows.

As her appearance was the signal previously agreed upon for his joining M. de Clermont and Montague, he bowed, *en passant*, and left the room.

De la Ville, who did not at first perceive her entrance, now advanced to meet her, and took her hand in a manner very different from the pert familiarity of his former style of address. She was going to withdraw it, however, in disgust, but the respectful air with which he accosted her, arrested the half accomplished design; and the observations that followed, were attended with so great a degree of

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astonishment,

astonishment, that it speedily absorbed every other consideration of inferior importance.

Apparently encouraged by a mark of condescension so unusual from Charlotte, he enquired after the Countess with a tenderness of expression, and a look of anxiety, equally new as unexpected; evinced much solicitude to hear of her perfect restoration to health, and hinted a wish for permission to assure her, in person, of the interest he was now disposed to take in her happiness and welfare.

In short, so strange, so incomprehensible was the visible change which had taken place in his whole conduct, language, and deportment, that his wondering auditor gazed upon him in much surprise, and could hardly credit the testimony of her own senses.

A pause, accompanied by a look of expectation, at length seemed to indicate his desire for a favourable answer.

To repress bad inclinations, and encourage those of a contrary description, on the smallest appearance tending to amendment, is equally wise and prudent. Though Charlotte was not credulous enough to suppose the ruling principle in his character totally extinct, or even imagined him possessed of sufficient stability to persevere in a proper line of conduct, yet she chose to confine her suspicions

cions to her own breast, and determined to proceed in a different manner from the private suggestions of probability, that no feasible pretence, in the event of resuming his former proceedings, might be reasonably afforded for future exculpation.

In consequence of this resolution, she expressed the satisfaction derived from a mode of behaviour so opposite to what he had hitherto pursued; and assured him, if really marked with the lasting impression of sincerity, that his conduct should be justly represented to the Countess, and lose nothing of its original merit in the repetition.

From what farther passed on this occasion, Charlotte gradually began to think him entitled to some small degree of belief, as his subsequent conversation evinced a desire to make amends for past errors, much beyond what she conceived either his head or heart capable of attempting.

It is true the tenor of his behaviour on the sudden indisposition of Madame de Narbonne, and the cause to which he ascribed her illness, fully indicated that the latent embers of vanity were rather suppressed than ultimately extinguished: but she recollected the old adage, which wisely reminds us that "Rome was not built in a single day;" and knowing that deep-rooted passions were difficult to eradicate,

eradicate, expected not to meet with the superior exertions of a philosophic mind, where mediocrity of talent, and instability of disposition, were the characteristic traits of the probationer.

She nevertheless wished to prolong the penitential mood to its utmost limits; and saw, in the continuation of his present temper, innumerable advantages accruing to the furtherance of these secret schemes now under contemplation.

In this view of the case, she planned her measures with so much wisdom, that Madame de Narbonne was prevailed upon to conceal any outward symptom of disgust; and persuaded (though not without extreme reluctance) to appear amongst the guests now assembled in the Castle.

In complying with this request of Charlotte's (which had even been urged with tears), the Countess was perhaps principally guided by the propelling inclination which continually led her to obtain some knowledge of St. Julian's history.

The remainder of the day was spent in attempts to fortify her mind with resolution to perform the part she had now undertaken. Charlotte, as we have said, left nothing untried for this purpose, that reason, necessity, or a genius fertile in expedients

dients could suggest ; and she was rewarded by the behaviour of the Countess when she made her appearance below stairs in the evening.

De la Ville, accompanied by M. de Clermont (with whom he now generally affected to associate), met her as she descended. A chill shivering pervaded her frame as he approached, and the instinctive sensation of the moment was immediately to regain her own apartment ; but a glance from Charlotte's eye somewhat re-assured her, and that inestimable friend was afterwards gratified for her past trouble and anxiety on the occasion, by the reception Madame condescended to favour him with ; which, though reserved, distant, and coolly repelling in the extreme, was yet, in some respects, better than she once ventured to flatter herself with obtaining, and might still have appeared to greater advantage, had not the expression of her features, when addressing M. de Clermont, formed a strong contrast to that with which she regarded her husband.

But the eyes of the agitated Countess incessantly wandered from both ; and while they congratulated her on the absence of her late indisposition, she vainly endeavoured to recal her fugitive thoughts to their proper station.

Her

Her emotion visibly increased at every step; and the gentlemen conceiving they had prematurely complimented her on the imaginary recovery of her health, were now as eager in evincing their regret, and even gave it as their opinion that she had better return to her chamber.

To this proposal, so *mal-apropos* made, she bestowed no answer; but slightly bowing her head, walked on, supporting herself on Charlotte's arm, and declining any assistance from the gentlemen, being unwilling to offend De la Ville by availing herself of M. de Clermont's friendly attention, while predetermined to refuse his offers in the same way; to have accepted which, would have been a mark of distinction infinitely beyond her intentions.

At last her trembling limbs conducted her to the door of the sitting room; it opened, and the first object that met her eyes was St. Julian conversing in one of the bow windows with Hastings and Madame de Clermont! The Chevalier turned round on their entrance, when his attention was instantly caught by the interesting look with which she eagerly regarded him.

In the following moment the deathlike paleness of her cheeks changed its hue; the alteration, however,

ever, was but transient—it immediately fled, returned again, and again vanished from observation!—Their eyes met. St Julian bowed low, and uttered a modest but appropriate compliment on her return to the company.

Hastings, though no superficial spectator, was totally at a loss to comprehend the secret motive or source of what he saw; suspecting, however, that the scene required management, he benevolently contrived to divert the thoughts of those present to some other object, and by that means afforded Madame de Narbonne time to recover herself. The company afterwards separating into different parties, a desultory conversation ensued, which prevented the effects that might have resulted from observations more generally diffusive.

As several of the neighbouring gentlemen, who had called at the Castle in the course of the day, recognized in St. Julian a benefactor, in some shape or other, during the residence of the Royalists in their vicinity, the variety of anecdotes this discovery naturally produced, set his character in a yet more favourable point of view; and Madame de Clermont being determined to fix him for an admirer from the first moment she cast her eyes upon him, eagerly promoted every repetition of the kind;

kind; amongst the number of which she failed not to recollect his preservation of the Castle and its inhabitants from the fury of hostile devastation, at the period when a band of armed men attempted to pillage it, and had made their way good to the end of the gallery that led to Madame de Narbonne's apartments.

The mentioning of this circumstance produced a more particular account of the whole transaction from Montague, who, being personally engaged in the contest, was enabled to do justice to the prodigies of valour, and good conduct, then exhibited by the gallant Chevalier.

Details of this description increased the interest every one already felt for the young hero; who, while he ineffectually endeavoured to turn the conversation into a different channel, received the grateful effusions of those around him with an air of modest, yet manly dignity, which evinced that the voice of approbation was not new to him, though at the same time he did not appear to feel any ostentatious importance from the performance of actions, which (under similar circumstances) he conceived were incumbent duties in our intercourse with society; and therefore, as due from man to man, could claim no just title to the praise of supererogation.

But

But "the due from man to man" is so seldom considered as a legal debt by his fellow-mortal, that the actual payment of it may, the author conceives (and experience warrants her assertion), be sometimes placed on the list of "*extraordinaries*," without committing any deed of a very derogatory description on the usual propensities of human nature: which she acknowledges to be perfectly just, generous, and benevolent on every occasion *where self-interest is totally out of the question!*

While the merits of the Chevalier St. Julian formed a leading trait in the conversation, Madame de Narbonne, apparently fearful of losing a single syllable of what was passing, remained almost profoundly silent; seldom evincing the smallest inclination to interrupt any of the speakers, though it was easy to see that the applause bestowed on the object of her constant observation, was a source from whence she herself derived infinite gratification; and her looks repeatedly seemed to say, "'twas noble! 'twas glorious!" as the catalogue of those actions which had reached their knowledge, were enumerated by his eulogists before her.

Oppressed with effusions of gratitude, where he did not imagine any were due, and finding his
attempts

attempts to change the subject perpetually frustrated, St. Julian eagerly seized the first favourable pause for adverting to the beauties of the place; and pointing to a Temple in the park, on which the bright rays of a setting sun were yet quivering, as the soft zephyr of the evening lightly waved the slender foliage in its vicinity, expressed a wish to see it nearer; upon which Montague offering to accompany him, they strolled out arm in arm together.

Madame de Narbonne followed them with her eyes; and a deep sigh burst from her bosom as the intervening plantations excluded them from continued observation.

For once, however, she mentally acknowledged herself not displeased with her husband's conduct; which, in his behaviour to this interesting stranger, was of a nature that certainly did him no discredit, and greatly surpassed her expectations.

She therefore spoke to him, when he casually addressed her, with more attention and civility than had hitherto escaped her on such occasions. The secret cause of this condescension contradicted for once Solomon's assertion, that "there is nothing new under the sun!" at least the Countess imagined

imagined so; for the original incitement to an alteration of former systems was undoubtedly enigmatical in whatever point of view she considered it.

CHAP. XII.

- “ Extinguish not, but smother for a while
“ This fatal flame, and greatly sacrifice
“ Thy private sufferings to the public welfare.”

MILLER.

THE evening was too inviting to be entirely passed within doors; of course the example of Montague and his companion soon became pretty general, and ere long, Madame de Narbonne and Charlotte found themselves almost left alone.

The room was not yet, however, altogether so empty as to permit the freedom of exchanging their reciprocal sentiments on the past occurrences of the day; and the Countess, not disposed to converse

on

on any other subject, reclined on the arm of the sofa in a musing attitude, internally wondering at the absence of the two young friends, whose walk she could not help thinking was unusually lengthened.

Meanwhile Charlotte had placed herself at a large glass door, in the form of a Gothic window, that opened upon the shrubbery. Occupied in listening to a little feathered warbler, that sat perched upon a honeysuckle bough, her glove dropped upon the steps, and before she could stoop to recover it, a little dog suddenly snatched it up, and ran off with it in his mouth. She pursued the fugitive however, but had nearly lost sight of him, when turning the corner of an arbour, she came full upon the Chevalier and Montague, who seemed engaged in close conversation.

Charlotte apologized for her unintentional interruption by relating the cause of it; and learned that the purloiner of the stolen article was the property of St. Julian, to whose feet the trophy was now brought at the command of his master.

The Chevalier raised the little crouching animal in his arms, and taking the glove from his mouth, gracefully presented it to its original owner.

“A fair exchange is allowed to be no robbery, Mademoiselle,” said he.—“In return for my
exemplary

exemplary honesty, will you candidly answer a question, in the solution of which I am particularly interested?"

St. Julian took her hand—he fixed his eyes with imploring earnestness on her face; and an universal tremor seemed to agitate his whole frame, as he thus proceeded:—

“Stationed by the incumbent duties of my profession, for so great a length of time, in this neighbourhood, it cannot be thought surprising if many of its local histories should, at various periods, have reached my knowledge. Amongst other traditions, those related of the Rock of Narbonne have not composed the least marvellous part of the formidable catalogue; but sharing the fate of their fellow legends, they were hitherto forgotten when the voice of the speaker no longer dwelt upon them. Accident, however, led our steps just now in that direction; and leisure permitting time for the gratification of curiosity, I prevailed upon Monsieur to accompany me thither. The saloon and the chapel, apparently excavations cut originally from this huge mass of stone, could not fail to attract my attention, from the uncommon labour, and simple elegance of their exterior appearance; but every idea was speedily occupied by far different considerations. I had climbed a high and dangerous projection

projection of the rock, which overhangs that part of the river, in too tremendous a manner to be frequently visited; and while there, observing the effect of light and shade on the first beams of the rising moon trembling on the water beneath, or presenting a thousand fantastic reflections on its surface, my contemplations were suddenly interrupted by the low breathing of a harp, accompanied by a voice, which, though evidently more than half suppressed, still vibrates on my ear with sensations of the most refined rapture.

“Confounded at a circumstance so incomprehensible, I endeavoured to discover the place from whence this magic sound issued; but it had now ceased, and my efforts were unsuccessful, till Cartouch came springing to where I stood, looked up in my face, fawned upon my hands, and gaily wagging his tail, scampered off again.—The harmonious strains once more floated on the breeze! The little fellow repeated the same gambols, and leaping round me, then upon the rocks, running to a small distance, returning again, and again looking up in my face with inconceivable earnestness, seemed to request my attendance, as he nimbly sprang over intervening obstacles.

“In attempting to follow my guide, I experienced innumerable difficulties: at length he became

stationary on the very edge of a dreadful precipice, which frowned over the watery expanse below, even in a more terrific manner than that I had recently quitted.

“ My hopes and labours now soon became equally unavailing. To proceed farther appeared morally impracticable : I therefore stopped; and Cartouch, as he repeatedly looked back, seeing me still standing motionless, and seemingly inattentive to his mute entreaties, began to bark in a louder key than he had hitherto done. The invisible performer, no doubt alarmed by this signal of near neighbourhood, instantly became silent, but not before the voice that accompanied a well-known song, once more in clearer notes struck my ear!—Tell me then, Mademoiselle, I beseech you—I entreat you tell me, what I am to think of this most extraordinary occurrence?—Is it visionary? Is it real?—Can *she* whom I have so long mourned as dead, still be an inhabitant of this world? or am I to credit the reports of the multitude respecting those supernatural beings said to haunt the place?—The Chevalier Montague evades my enquiries; and yet I can easily perceive he is not altogether unacquainted with the cause of them. It is true, he heard not the music, for it apparently ascended from the river, at a distance
from

from where he stood; but I am not the less convinced of his ability to satisfy my curiosity on the subject, nor do I doubt that *your's* is still more extensive, from the intimacy that has so long subsisted between the Countess and yourself. Tell me then, know you the original of this picture?— You recollect it, I presume!” continued the Chevalier, taking the miniature from his breast which he had obtained on his first interview with Charlotte.—“ To her whose resemblance it bears, Cartouch once belonged, and he too surely recognized his former mistress, to let me suppose there is any mistake in the case. I have already given incontrovertible proofs, on a similar occasion, that I may be trusted; Oh then torture me no longer by suspense! Say only that Victorine, my charming Victorine, lives, is well, and in safety! I will endeavour to rest contented for the present with this assurance, till you know me better: but grant me this satisfaction, I earnestly conjure you.”

The looks, the language, the ardent manner of the Chevalier were not to be resisted;—no oath, no solemn engagement to the contrary, interfered to interdict this concession in his favour; and she found herself unable any longer to withstand his eager solicitude for a gratification which it would have been inhuman to refuse, particularly when no

moral principle could possibly be infringed by the compliance. On the place of Victorine's retreat, however, and every other circumstance which she conceived herself not warranted to mention, without the previous consent of Madame de Narbonne, Charlotte remained obstinately silent; and St. Julian soon became sensible that nothing farther was to be hoped for at present.

Now perfectly convinced, however, that the object of his tender anxiety still existed, and equally so that she was in honourable hands, though in what manner concealed in the rock he could not imagine, the Chevalier felt relieved from a material part of that oppressive solicitude which had for some time weighed heavy on his spirits; and in compliance with the hints delicately thrown out by Montague, he related a few of those circumstances (already known to the reader), explanatory of his situation with Victorine. As public affairs were unavoidably connected with this topic, the name of Marat was introduced of course, in all the shades of its usual sanguinary colouring.

Among other instances of human depravity, St. Julian said he had received the most shocking account of the secret transactions carried on by him, and his nephew Austin, to disturb the peace of the Castle, and make the Countess and her husband
still

still more unhappy than common report even pronounced them, by instilling the blackest insinuations into his mind relative to the supposed dishonourable conduct of Madame de Narbonne, and her young companion; against the latter of whom, the Chevalier added, he had reason to believe these two unprincipled wretches entertained the strongest prejudice; originating, no doubt, in their mutual apprehensions from her acknowledged superiority of character, not merely in point of moral rectitude, but likewise in respect to her great abilities and uncommon penetration; which had, often indeed, he found, put them upon acting with even more caution than they generally used: and as her removal from the Castle was the first step to the probable success of their own views; their united forces were to have been tried with De la Ville for that purpose, had not the late defeat of the Republicans overturned the whole design, and obliged them to adopt new measures.

What these new measures were, the Chevalier pretended not to say; but he could not conceive them to be of a more favourable nature than those they were under the necessity of relinquishing; and therefore, impressed with this idea, he had readily accepted of the post assigned him at Narbonne, in order to have an opportunity of putting her and

the Countess on their guard, and to be at hand to render them any assistance in his power, if such should be required.

St. Julian further told them, that this intelligence had only been received a few days before he was appointed to escort De la Ville home, and remain with him for some time at the Castle.

The gratitude of a prisoner, whom he had the good fortune to save from the bayonet of an enraged soldier (then upon the point of sacrificing him during some commotion which had taken place in his dungeon), proved the means of these facts being entrusted to him.

It appeared that the captive was formerly a confidential associate of the elder Marat; and, in conjunction with the nephew of the latter, had been directed to repair to the masquerade, formerly given by De la Ville, there to act as circumstances rendered practicable, for the pretended good of the Republic: but their own secret interest was the real spring of the whole; and to secure that important object, nothing was to be declined, however criminal, that could tend to its advancement, with personal safety to themselves.

In the prosecution of this view they were, however (as has been observed), fortunately disappointed by a number of unforeseen occurrences, not to
mention

mention the vanity of poor Jacqueline, by which their intentions in regard to the Countess were pretty well ascertained.

In the course of these details, Charlotte and her two companions had repeatedly passed the window at which the Countess was now seated; and, from the earnest conversation in which they were apparently engaged, she naturally flattered herself with the gratification of that curiosity so long entertained on the Chevalier St. Julian's account.

As they approached the steps leading to the glass door, she perceived they were now accompanied by Madame de Clermont, who was leaning familiarly on his arm.

The rest of the company began to re-assemble; and the Countess soon after retired, at an early period, to her apartment, where Charlotte speedily joined her.

In a tremulous and agitated voice, she immediately entreated to hear her communications. Charlotte knew these were but of one description, and the question confounded her.

It is true she might reasonably have expected such an enquiry; yet had not a single item of the matter occurred to her memory, till the moment in which it was demanded. Too much engrossed by subjects she imagined more important, either

in a public or private view, the often repeated injunctions of her friend had been totally neglected!

Sensible, when too late, of her error, Mademoiselle de Cordet endeavoured to apologize for it in the best manner she was able:—and the Countess, observing her distress, from a motive of delicacy, forbore to increase it by dwelling upon her *own* disappointment.

Indeed this was at the present time easier to suffer, from the previous information that St. Julian was to remain for a certain period at the Castle.

Whether owing to the recent hardships he had undergone in the early part of his captivity, or some more accidental cause, De la Ville found himself so much indisposed on the following morning, that he was under the necessity of procuring medical advice, and remaining in his apartment for several days.

On the forenoon of its first commencement, Charlotte studiously watched for an opportunity of indemnifying the Countess for her former neglect; but no one presented itself favourable to her wishes. The day proved wet and tempestuous, and the inhabitants of the Castle were consequently obliged to amuse themselves within doors. The gentlemen therefore repaired to the saloon, where billiards
and

and fencing alternately engaged their attention, till the approach of evening; when finding the storm unabated, they assembled in the sitting room, and declared their intention of not separating till the usual hour of repose.

In spite of the above impediment to walks of pleasure, the Countess and Charlotte, however, seized a temporary cessation of the rain, and striking into a more impervious part of the forest, where there was a tolerable shelter from the violent gusts of wind that roared through the bending branches above them, they reached the rock in safety, and remained with Victorine for some time.

On their return, M. de Clermont followed Madame de Narbonne to her dressing-room, and informed her of the secret measures already commenced, to prepare for the worst. He likewise mentioned his belief of De la Ville's present sincerity in the system of reform he had now adopted; but at the same time warned her of trusting too far to appearances, as he confessed himself by no means convinced of the stability of such a character. This idea therefore rendering it more necessary to make the most of those advantages the existing bent of his mind afforded at the juncture, he had, he said, endeavoured to strengthen De la Ville's growing partiality in his own favour, by every laudable method.

method that could possibly be devised for the purpose; and in consequence of this plan, had proved sufficiently successful to obtain the most solemn and reiterated promises of leaving the Countess entirely mistress of her own actions, without attempting to molest her with any interference whatever on his part.

While the first impression of this engagement retained its pristine force, M. de Clermont re-urged the necessity of active and energetic measures, in order equally to guard against the effects of De la Ville's natural unsteady disposition, or that political hurricane, which, there was every reason to apprehend, would speedily return again, to overwhelm their devoted country with a repetition of former calamities.

He then mentioned his design of prevailing upon the master of the Castle to accompany him to Clermont, while in the interim the subterranean passage to the rock might be explored, and cleared of the rubbish which for a series of years had nearly rendered it impassable. Mr. Hastings, after seeing this piece of labour properly performed, was to secure a vessel in one of the neighbouring ports for their reception.

The Countess sighed deeply during the detail of the various arrangements given by M. de Clermont; but

but her secret intentions still remained unshaken. Warmly interested, however, in the safety of others, though thus predetermined against her own, she sanctioned every measure with her approbation, and readily acquiesced in the propriety of the whole.

Among a great variety of subjects discussed by the company this evening, none attracted more attention than the interesting anecdotes related by St. Julian, one of which particularly engrossed the notice of his auditors.

Perhaps this might, in a considerable degree, be owing to the uncommon elegance of manner, and commanding elocution of the speaker.

Probably no person was ever more happily gifted by Nature in all the graceful and insinuating powers of recitation, or possessed an easier flow of language, than this young man; accompanied at the same time by a certain degree of innate modesty, which rendered every thing he said or did peculiarly fascinating.

The Countess (who was now prevailed upon to join her guests with little difficulty) again became all eye and ear; while the varying expression of her countenance strongly evinced the interest she took in his fate, during descriptions of hair-breadth escapes, and all the fearful train of *et ceteras* attendant on war and its concomitant dangers.

The transactions to which he had himself been a reluctant witness, seemed still, even on repetition, to affect his compassionate heart with the keenest sensations of commiseration.

Having finished some details of a more desultory nature, he commenced that we have just alluded to, in the following manner.

CHAP. XIII.

—————" The devoted wretch

" Now takes his midnight sleep, and idly dreams

" Of that to-morrow, which shall never come !

" ————— Oh may I stand unmov'd ;

" Nor fear to strike where Justice calls, nor dare

" To strike where she forbids !"

BROWN.

" ONE evening in the gloomy month of November, I was ordered out on a reconnoitring party. Our road lay across one of those high and almost impassable mountains in the Diocess of Seez, in the vicinity of which a body of the Royalists were then secretly quartered.

“Previously fatigued with a long and dreary march, the summit was gained with infinite difficulty; and it was only by the utmost exertions we kept ourselves from sinking beneath the attempt.

“Midnight seemed nearly “at odds with morning” before this design was entirely accomplished.

“Descending on the other side of the mountain, a bell, apparently belonging to a neighbouring monastery, suddenly rung an alarm. Soon after a person, in the habit of a Monk, hastily approaching, all at once stopped, and observing us for a moment with evident terror, immediately darted into a dark and thick grove of pines on the right.

“One of our number was quickly deputed to enquire into the motive of his flight, lest an ambuscade might be formed to intercept our farther progress.

“The messenger soon returned, accompanied by the unknown fugitive, who informed us that he belonged to the Abbaye of La Trappe, situated in the vicinage; that a band of lawless Republicans having violated the holy edifice, and committed innumerable outrages on its defenceless inhabitants, they were forced to fly in various directions from the sanguinary hands of the sacrilegious plunderers, upon which occasion he himself, among others, had
been

been under the necessity of taking up his abode near the spot where they now found him. He likewise mentioned that his father (who, upwards of fifty years ago, had become a member of the same Community) would have fallen an unresisting victim to the popular frenzy of the times, had he not borne him on his shoulders to their present place of concealment; to which he was returning from a private excursion in the environs of the Convent, when hearing the alarm bell ring, and mistaking the party for their late oppressors, he had suddenly fled in the precipitate manner which occasioned their pursuit.

‘ But why was the tocsin sounded ? ’ said I.

‘ Probably from the same cause that gave birth to my apprehensions,’ replied the Monk.—‘ Some of the Fathers still remain there; and those entrusted with the charge of watching the enemy’s return, have perhaps been guilty of a similar error with my own, and taken their friends for their foes.’

“ In consequence of this supposition, proper enquiries were immediately directed to be made, and the Monk was found to be right in his conjecture. The particular nature of my duty prevented me, at the period, from reaching the Convent; but it is needless to add that measures were instantly taken to undeceive the few remaining inhabitants.

“ The

“ The good Father afterwards led us to the rest of the religious fugitives, amounting to about six or eight in number.

“ The monastic restrictions of the Order had given way to the superior impulse of terror and self-preservation; and silence, that leading trait of the brotherhood, no longer held its gloomy reign over the sons of La Trappe.

“ It was agreed we should continue in this spot till the following day. Our canopy was the heavens, or rather the thick interwoven branches of the trees, under which we reposed our weary limbs. The holy fraternity were not better provided in point of lodgings; but, like ourselves, they had been long accustomed to hardships of this kind, and therefore had no just right to complain of a bed, which necessity *now*, as choice had done *formerly*, compelled them to occupy.

“ Every one knows that the Fathers of La Trappe make a practice of digging their own graves, and commonly sleeping in them during the time they live, or rather vegetate on earth. It is true their selection of this particular Order must originally be at their own option, in the first instance; and consequently they can afterwards have no just pretence for objecting to austerities, with the nature of which they were previously acquainted; and it is

no less true that their present couch was certainly not inferior to their usual one in point of comfort, at least it appeared so in a worldly view:—yet such is the attachment created by habit, such the aversion the human mind universally entertains for every species of compulsion, that what was once a voluntary act of their own, seemed, under different circumstances, to occasion no small discontent, when considered as an evil inflicted by others.

“ Some country people, who had been sent out to reconnoitre in different directions, returned in the morning with intelligence that no superior force of the enemy was sufficiently near to incommode us in our present station; we therefore determined to reach the Monastery of La Trappe without any farther delay.

“ This ancient fabric lies between the towns of Mortagne, Vernevil, and L’Aigle. It is nearly concealed from view by the mountains and lofty woods which surround it on every quarter.

“ The almost inhuman strictness of the Order is generally known; and the various details we had heard of it, joined to the gloomy grandeur of the neighbouring scenery, impressed our minds with a solemn degree of religious awe, not very far removed from sensations of horror, hardly to be described.

“ Two

“ Two of the fraternity accompanied us. At a certain distance from the first gate, one of them gave a signal previously agreed upon, by coughing three different times. This, after a few minutes had elapsed, was answered by an old feeble looking, grey-headed man, who cautiously opened a small wicket in a ruinous part of the wall. On being satisfied who we were, he slowly ascended from what afterwards appeared to be a vault under ground, and admitted us through a subterranean passage, which fortunately remained undiscovered by the late depredators.

“ The present apprehensions of these defenceless people being now at an end, the fugitives in the forest were requested to return again.

“ Many of the Community, however, still continued missing; but some of these might possibly be secreted in various concealments, even within the walls; and we proceeded to explore them under this impression. Our search was in some measure successful, and two-thirds of the brotherhood were nearly collected together before the close of the day.

“ I will not shock my hearers with a description of those who had fallen a sacrifice to ill-judged attempts at resistance, or the wanton instances of
savage

savage barbarity that marked the steps of the conqueror. Ten of the helpless and inoffensive victims lay dead under their own roof, which rapacious avarice had pillaged of every article in their reach, that seemed to be worth the trouble of a removal.

“ In making the tour of this gloomy and desolated abode, I was particularly struck with one of the cells. Its aspect looked upon a dark and dreary glen, the deep sides of which were closely lined with tall forest trees and ancient evergreens of the most sombre hue. From a high impending precipice, which tremendously frowned over the top of the whole, rushed a cataract of considerable magnitude, accompanied with a stunning sound awfully terrific, while the force and impetuosity of the descending torrent threw a grey mist over the woods to an inconceivable distance, as the white foam dashed down the rugged declivities, and covered them in its rapid progress.

“ Within the cell, which looked right up this horrific prospect, every thing conspired to increase the melancholy impression produced by a contemplation of the exterior.

“ In addition to the scanty furniture usually found in such places, a statue of Parian marble, large as life, stood in a recess of the wall. It represented a most beautiful female figure, finely proportioned

proportioned, dressed in the habiliments of the dead, and leaning on a black urn, while streams of blood seemed to issue from her breast, in unison with a new-opened vein in one of her snowy arms. A coffin stood at her side, into which she appeared to be gradually sinking; and the celestial expression of her lovely features approached so near the idea of actual existence, that it was hardly possible to conceive any deception could thus take place of apparent reality.

“But from the intelligent face, on which my eyes had hitherto dwelt with intense admiration, they soon rested on an object of more horror. At the feet of this masterpiece of art, lay one of the holy Fathers, cold, butchered, and dead! His stiffened arms were clasped round the insensible marble, and the still open, but glazed and ghastly optics, retained an expression of unutterable anguish, as they continued rivetted upon those of the dying beauty, that made my heart shudder within me.

“On the left hand of this ill-fated being hung a painting which afterwards attracted my notice. Something of the same idea seemed to be distinguishable through the whole of the design, with the addition of a young and elegant man, apparently withheld by force from the female figure, while he
eyed

eyed her expiring condition with a piercing air of love, agony, rage, and distraction, which seemed to affect her feelings more on his account than her own, and exhibited a most striking delineation of acute sensibility.

“ Absorbed in those reflections which naturally seize the mind on such occurrences, I observed not that my companions had already left me in pursuit of new objects to gratify their curiosity. One Monk alone remained in the cell, who had hitherto maintained the most profound silence; and a deep groan that burst from his breast, now first recalled his vicinage to my remembrance.

“ I turned to the corner in which he stood in an attitude of melancholy contemplation, intently gazing on his murdered associate, and applied for information on the subject before us.

“ He prefaced his answer with another deep groan, and then replied that ‘ he was but ill-qualified to discourse on this matter. Father Ambrose,’ continued the Monk, ‘ occupied this cell long before I became an unworthy member of the Community. He always seemed particularly attached to retirement, and the rules of the house precluded any attempt to disturb this inclination.

“ And where is the Father now then ?” said I.

“ He

‘ He lies at the feet of that statue !’ replied the Monk, in a solemn tone of voice, and pointing with his finger as he spoke.—‘ That low-laid, mangled corpse is all that now remains of Father Ambrose: I saw him fall, while concealed in the passage leading to his cell. The dagger of a ruffian reached his heart as he endeavoured to prevent his entrance: Father Ambrose groaned, staggered back a few paces, sunk at the side of that unconscious figure, clasped its knees with a convulsive grasp, and fixing his eyes on the countenance, instantly expired !!’ — — — —

“ The humid eye and faltering tongue of the narrator bore witness to the strength of his feelings when he concluded the last sentence. A solemn pause now succeeded for some minutes: a sigh heaved his bosom as a silent ejaculation ascended to Heaven; and a second one followed when his down-cast eyes again rested on the same sad object.

‘ Poor Father Ambrose !’ continued my venerable companion, ‘ gentle, generous, mild, and unfortunate was your general character in the Community ! Your mind seemed long prepared for an exit from this vain world, and the release came at last in a form least expected by one so retired, so inoffensive, and so good ! But the sufferings entailed
upon

upon mortality can never be totally excluded from any situation on earth, however sacred ! The tears you have often been observed to shed over that female form, and the common tenor of your solitary life, bespeak some dire, some unusual degree of human misery to have once wrung your bosom ; of its peculiar nature we must now for ever remain ignorant ! The impenetrable mystery that has hitherto enveloped it, is at length impressed with the awful seal of death, never, never more to be snatched from the obscurity of the grave, from the lasting oblivion of the silent tomb !'——

“ Again the Father paused ; and for some time I felt no ability to interrupt those mental contemplations, which, by the direction of his eyes, I perceived were immovably fixed on the melancholy scene before us.

“ When my voice became more obedient, I enquired if it were well ascertained that Father Ambrose had left no clue to the events of his early years—no written memorial of past times, by which the evils he had formerly suffered might be elucidated ? Minds fraught with sensibility, such as I gathered his to be, frequently derived a temporary relief from the melancholy indulgence of committing their sorrows to paper. Was it impossible that
such

such might have been the case in the present instance? Had he ever been observed so occupied?’

‘I have already said,’ returned the Monk, ‘that his love of retirement was extreme; indeed it even exceeded the usual limits prescribed by the restrictions of the Community: few opportunities, therefore, occurred for obtaining any knowledge of his lonely employments, except those which proved unavoidably obvious. The Superior and the Father Confessor, we have reason to believe, were acquainted with his history on his first becoming one of our number; but, like him, they too are no more!—Through the gloomy windings of that awe-inspiring glen, his solitary steps were often seen wandering at the early dawn of the morning, and more frequently still after the shades of twilight had closed in the deeper ones of night! But let me see—no written memorial say you? I think I once surprised him looking over a manuscript which appeared to be almost drenched in tears. If I rightly recollect too, it was hastily deposited, on my entrance, in that black marble urn.’

“This hint proved sufficient: it was eagerly pursued, in expectation that some degree of success would attend the scrutiny.

“The

“ The urn contained a number of papers, and several jewels of value.

“ The first parcel we examined was merely relative to the statue, and appeared to be duplicates of directions given to the sculptor; with a copy of a written order from the Superior, authorizing his free entrance to the Monastery, and the cell of Father Ambrose.

“ Under this a manuscript was found, and still lower down lay the jewels I have mentioned, which, by some unknown miracle, had escaped the grasp of *Republican honesty*!

“ With the Monk’s permission (who betrayed little curiosity on the occasion), I took possession of the manuscript to peruse it at my leisure, and afterwards saw the body of the unfortunate Ambrose laid in the grave he had himself prepared for its reception. The spot appropriated for this purpose was situated in the most gloomy and retired part of the glen already described, and exactly opposite the window of his own cell; from whence, no doubt, he has frequently contemplated the last receptacle of human misery, during the necessary cessations from his melancholy employment, which other duties required of him.

“ When the ceremony of interment was over, and the holy Fathers retired, in solemn procession,

to pray for the soul of their departed brother in the chapel of the Monastery, I returned to the solitary spot, and placing myself at the head of the grave, prepared to commence the perusal of the manuscript. In this occupation, however, I experienced some difficulty :—in many parts it was much torn, in others whole sentences were nearly obliterated by the damps of the cell, and the tears shed over it by the miserable writer. Nevertheless it was easy to discover that the history of his life formed the substance of the mangled pages, and what intelligence could be procured from them, was evidently of an interesting nature.

“ It appeared that Father Ambrose was originally descended from a noble House in Florence, where he had early in life united himself to a young lady of superior rank, unsanctioned by the consent or approbation of her family, some of whom afterwards contrived to steal her away from his knowledge; and having, at a subsequent period, likewise made themselves masters of his person, conveyed him to the place of her concealment, where he was sternly commanded, as the price of his own safety, and the punishment of his imputed presumption, to open her veins, and bleed her to death, in a warm bath in which she was seated, expecting her release from mortality!

“ The

“ The room assigned for the perpetration of this horrid deed of vengeance was ill-lighted and gloomy; the intended executioner and his victim were consequently at first ignorant of each other's situation:—the fatal discovery, however, was no sooner made, than, as may be supposed, a firm, indignant, and positive refusal succeeded on the part of the wretched husband; whose determination continuing immoveable, he had, at last, the excruciating anguish to see her own brother perform the dreadful operation, while forcibly withheld himself, by surrounding ruffians, from flying to her assistance.

“ Of what immediately followed, the unhappy Ambrose was no longer sensible:—his reason fell a sacrifice to the horrors of the scene! Instant insanity ensued, and in this state he wandered for years over the world, unheeded and unknown! At length a lucid interval returned:—he happened to be near the Monastery of La Trappe at the time; he entered it, gradually regained his faculties, assumed the habit of the Order, and renounced every exterior object for ever!

“ Having no near relatives in the universe he had quitted, his wealth was bequeathed to the Community, in consideration of which he was permitted to employ a statuary in the execution of a design
long

long cherished as a relief to his sorrows; and a resemblance of his ever-lamented wife was by these means obtained.

“ Such are the particulars I have been able to collect from the mutilated manuscript! You already know the closing scene of poor Father Ambrose’s ill fated life: he is now removed beyond the hand of the oppressor, and freed from all his sorrows!”

CHAP. XIV.

“ No one friendly beam

“ E’er gave a glimpse from whom I am descended.

“ Heaven kept it hid in darkness ;

“ Conceal’d me from myself, and from my blood.”

HILL.

FOR some time after this period no material incident occurred at the Castle. St Julian daily became a greater favourite with its inhabitants. The interest he had made himself in the heart of the Countess gradually effected a change in her sentiments beyond what the most earnest entreaties of her friends had hitherto been able to accomplish.

Insensibly she began to relax in that system of retirement so long persevered in; her appearance in the entertaining rooms ceased to be any thing unusual; she was frequently met with among the visitors, or seen ~~straying through the~~ beautiful and romantic scenery of Narbonne; accompanied by the Chevalier, who, to the infinite mortification of Madame de Clermont, seemed far more solicitous to accommodate the former with his supporting arm, than any of the other females at the Castle.

In one of those rambles through the grove of pines, the Countess and her companion happened to be separated from the rest of the company; and being in a remote path which led to the recess, imperceptibly pursued it till the picturesque porch of the saloon was seen through a vista at the end of the thick spreading foliage that entwined over them from the luxuriant branches of the surrounding trees.

The Countess started at the sight; but recollecting that the saloon, two apartments adjoining to the chapel, and the chapel itself, were none of them prohibited, though seldom visited from a knowledge of her predilection for retirement in that quarter, she felt her first reluctance gradually decrease, and even admitted the Chevalier to the former, with the ease of an old acquaintance—a
circumstance:

circumstance that appeared surprising to herself upon reflection.

St. Julian, from the period when he had reason to believe that Victorine was an inhabitant of this spot, had frequently resorted hither, and spent many a solitary hour in tracing the boundary of the rock, or climbing its steep ascent to catch a note of the *invisible musician's celestial harmony*. With its exterior situation he imagined himself therefore perfectly acquainted; but this was the first view obtained of the interior, and his heart fluttered as he followed Madame up the steps. She too seemed agitated, and seated herself upon the sofa, without speaking for several minutes.

While the Chevalier was viewing the various and valuable paintings which adorned the walls of this apartment, Madame, roused in some degree from her reverie, continually followed him with her eyes, as he moved round the room. At length she opened a large Indian cabinet near the sofa, and unlocking an inner door, took from it a picture considerably larger than any common sized miniature, and holding it in her hand, alternately gazed upon it, and the young Royalist.

At last—"St. Julian!" said she, "in answer to Mademoiselle de Cordet's enquiries, and those I have even ventured to make myself, respecting your
K 4 family,

family, you have hitherto evaded our curiosity in a manner that evidently shewed the subject was a disagreeable one. Shall I then be considered as unpardonable if I once more recur to the same topic? What am I to understand from that air of pensive melancholy that invariably overspreads your countenance when any allusion to the topic is introduced? If questions of this nature are distressing to you, to me an ignorance of them is more than distressing—it is agony in the extreme, protracted agony which I can no longer bear! Oh then satisfy the irresistible sensation that forcibly impels me to urge this often repeated theme! Mistake not my motives, however, for desiring the investigation—my sentiments in your favour are parental; no item of a different nature (such as the warmth of my expressions might lead superficial observers to conclude was the case), mingles with what I feel for you. Speak then to me with the confidence of filial affection; tell me who you really are, and open your heart on the subject, with the freedom of a son addressing a beloved mother. A son! what have I said! Good Heavens!”

The Countess covered her face, and wept.

Affected himself almost to tears, St. Julian found every tender sluice in his heart opened to obey her; and kissing her hand in silence, as he gracefully bent

bent one knee before her, immediately acceded to a request so powerfully enforced.

A veil of mystery, however, still hung over his early years, on which no satisfaction could be procured; all he knew of his history was a faint recollection of living in a cottage with two old and very indigent parents, who, at length, finding themselves unable to maintain him, consented to let a Nobleman in the neighbourhood take him as an attendant upon his only son; after which they removed to some other place, without apparently thinking it necessary to make any farther enquiries respecting his destiny.

With the family of St. Julian (whose name he continued to bear) his time was not unprofitably spent. From a menial situation the young Count gradually promoted him to that of one approaching nearer an equality of rank, and distinguished him with the appellation of *friend*.

Their studies were now the same, their inclinations appeared similar, and the affections of their hearts alike rivetted on each other. Every advantage of education was bestowed upon the youth of their adoption, in an equal portion with the representative of this noble House; and Henry, to all appearance, was not an object of much less consequence in their eyes.

But human happiness is an instable possession at best. In the midst of the most flattering prospects, and scenes of the purest felicity, the young Count St. Julian was thrown from a vicious horse, and expired on the spot! His mother, happily for herself, had long paid the great debt of Nature; and her husband, unable to support the loss of an only child, soon after joined them in a better world!

The princely fortune possessed by this Nobleman, now devolved upon a collateral branch of the family, in almost every respect an opposite character to his worthy predecessor.

This man seized on the valuable acquisition with the avidity of the most rapacious avarice, without judging it at all necessary to provide in the smallest degree for the young orphan, who, from motives of delicacy in his late beloved benefactors, had hitherto passed for a distant relative of their own, and as such had been mentioned in the legacy bequeathed to him by the old Count.

Henry perceiving that no notice was taken of this matter, nor any preparation made for discharging it, took an opportunity, after some time had elapsed, to remind the new Lord of the circumstance; and, to his infinite astonishment, was given to understand that the will which contained this bequest, happening to be deficient in some of the forms

forms requisite for rendering it a legal donation, the payment could not be properly demanded, and was consequently refused in a style and manner not much calculated to soften the pang of unexpected disappointment. But the poor and the friendless, however they may feel the hand of oppression, are seldom superabundantly gifted with ability to redress their own grievances, even in this world so justly celebrated for *incontrovertible proofs of moral integrity, and genuine disinterestedness*.

Henry was exactly placed in such a predicament. He possessed no means to enforce a compliance, in opposition to the fiat of so rich an antagonist: but his spirit revolting against the ungenerous advantage taken of a casual omission to deprive him of what, in his situation, was an object of no small importance, though comparatively a trifling consideration to the wealthy defrauder, he ventured to remonstrate in terms rather more indignantly appropriate than wise, and received in return a—blow!

Now this was a species of argument which the stomach of the young St. Julian felt no great appetite to digest; and therefore, as a prelude to its improvement, he first knocked the manual rhetorician down, and afterwards gave him a chance of

being shot through the head by that usual mode of honourable retribution—a challenge!

Count St. Julian, however, was too sensible of what he owed to his own safety, and estimated the good things of the earth too highly, to give “a rash boy”—“a low plebeian” (as he affected to style him) a second opportunity of proving a *physical equality* (at least) with his ignoble oppressor. He declined the demanded atonement in a way that rendered it impossible for Henry to obtain it; and by the conduct he pursued to effect this circumstance, placed his courage, his principles, and character in so contemptible a point of view, that the other became almost ashamed of such an opponent, and left him to the opprobrium he so justly merited.

St. Julian was now a citizen of the world at large, and the “how to dispose of himself,” presented a question of some difficulty to answer. Endowed with a soaring mind, ill adapted to his rank in society; high-spirited, generous, and brave, the blow he had received, though from a wretch almost below chastisement, still dwelt upon his mind, and corroded every feeling. To do away the impression this degrading idea might give rise to in the opinion of the multitude, as likewise to destroy the effect of those malevolent aspersions disseminated to
injure

injure him by Count St. Julian, on every opportunity consonant with considerations of his own personal safety; Henry, without bestowing much individual reflection on the subject, yielded to the natural bent of his disposition, and fixed upon the military line as his future profession through life.

M. Charette was not totally unknown to him; he had several times seen him with the old Count St. Julian, and on these occasions received many proofs of attention from the hero of La Vendee. To him he therefore now hastened, and offering his immediate services, was instantly enrolled amongst the gallant warriors who composed that Officer's army.

We shall here relate a circumstance with which Henry St. Julian himself was only partially acquainted, as it may contribute to elucidate Charette's reasons for part of that attention he invariably shewed this young man; and it may likewise serve to account for the mysterious terms in which his *protégé* was frequently mentioned, when any questions were asked about his birth or family.

In several conversations held with the late Count, relative to the future destination of "his two boys," as he called the younger St. Julian and his adopted friend Henry, the old man had always spoke of the
latter

latter as a character of uncommon promise, and one who, from all his own observations on his temper and disposition, was born to better expectations than those which his reputed humble parents seemed qualified to place him in. This idea was indeed not entirely produced by the youth's individual portion of merit, but by a piece of intelligence which occurred soon after the commencement of his introduction at the Castle of St. Julian.

A neighbouring peasant one day entering his father's house rather abruptly, surprised the latter in the very act of counting over a sum of money, which, to him, who had never before seen so much gold collected together, appeared of far greater magnitude than was really the case. It was mixed with some other valuable articles in the jewellery way; but the view of the whole was but transient, as the owner of the treasure hastily pushed it into a little box, which he instantly removed out of sight. The man, not long after this incident, retired to another part of the country, and was known to have rapidly advanced from a state of humble poverty, to one of plenty and ease.

This circumstance, with some others of a like description, reached the knowledge of the Count; and, joined to the aspiring genius and noble demeanor

demeanor of his *protégé*, naturally created a suspicion of something more than common, though all attempts to obtain a development of the mystery was found, upon trial, impracticable.

That there existed a mystery, nevertheless, several subsequent events fully ascertained; but, though Charette was made acquainted with Count St. Julian's sentiments on the subject, the whole affair was hushed up by the order of that Nobleman, who studiously concealed from Henry the conclusion drawn from those discoveries which had transpired relative to his father's increasing prosperity; rightly judging that, if true, Providence would take its own time for the disclosure, and therefore it was unnecessary to build a foundation for *present* suspense on *future* uncertainty: while, on the other hand, should he have formed an erroneous notion of the business, Henry would smart under the disappointment of hopes, the sparkling rays of which had probably operated to increase the usual aspiring propensity of his disposition, and fix every thought on that superiority of station, from whence he might finally be obliged to descend to the contemplation of more moderate prospects.

St. Julian therefore conceived himself still a being of an inferior order, as far as the adventitious advantages

advantages of high birth and riches were wanting; but, in other respects, he mentally felt that "man to man was equal all the world over;" and uniformly acted up to this conviction, without trenching, in any degree whatever, on the nicest verge of that sensation of innate modesty, with which the masculine firmness of his character was so delicately blended, and of which he never lost sight for a single moment during the relation of the various distresses and difficulties that a friendless and isolated individual, like himself, is frequently reduced to struggle with.

Madame, through the whole of the narration, could perceive no circumstance to account for the inexplicable interest she constantly found herself disposed to take in this young man's welfare. One thing, however, still surprised her, and required explanation—"Why had he been hitherto so strangely averse to gratify their curiosity? why so unwilling to speak on the subject, and so ready, on every occasion, to evade it?"

The Chevalier seemed affected by the question, and paused, apparently absorbed in thought. The Countess fixed her eyes upon his face with a look of the most expressive enquiry. St. Julian observed it, made an effort on his feelings, and,
upon

upon a second repetition of the same demand, honestly acknowledged that an unconquerable attachment formed for a woman of very superior rank, together with the degradation he had suffered from the hand of his benefactor's unworthy successor, rendered the topic so infinitely distressing to his mind, that it was always with the utmost degree of reluctance he could prevail upon himself to commence it. Every allusion to the theme more forcibly recalled to remembrance the immense distance that situation and circumstances had placed between him and happiness; while, at the same time, the ardent and unconquerable nature of his wishes (which it was morally impossible to eradicate or suppress) ever recurred, with the most mortifying conviction of the insurmountable obstacles to their attainment, originating in the humble obscurity of his birth, and consequent rank in society.

Madame de Narbonne thought no inequality on his side could have the effect he ascribed to it, with any woman who was worthy of being distinguished by his favourable opinion; and again made him repeat the leading features of his story, while she endeavoured to inspire him with juster impressions of female penetration, than to imagine that the
mere

mere possession of wealth and grandeur was indiscriminately held in preference by the whole sex.

St. Julian replied that reflections of that nature were not, he well knew, applicable to her of whom he spoke. No; it was a conviction of the miseries produced to both from his deficiency in these respects that wrung his heart; for in consequence of such being the case, the lady had been compelled to give him up, by the positive orders of the Queen, while a solemn and binding promise was extorted from himself to the same purpose.

The Countess could administer no consolation on the subject of birth; but as to wealth, the ability to assist him in that way was still in her power; and she emphatically assured him he might fully command that ability whenever he chose to bring her intentions to the proof.

The Chevalier again respectfully kissed her hand; and a tear dropped upon it, as she compared him, at the moment, with the picture of St. Hypolite, which she had taken from the Indian case on their first entrance, where it was once more deposited on rising to leave the recess.

Madame

Madame remained silent and thoughtful during their walk to the Castle. Hopes of the knew not what, but sufficiently indulged to assume something like the semblance of probability, now no longer retained that form; but were at length dispersed for ever, and ascertained to be indeed "airy nothings," unworthy of the mental shelter so vainly afforded them.

CHAP. XV.

“ Neither man nor angel can discern
“ Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
“ Invisible, except to God alone.”

MILTON.

THOUGH the termination of Madame de Narbonne's enquiries had closed without producing any individual satisfaction to herself on *one* subject, yet she nevertheless found a degree of ease from the removal of suspense; and rejoiced to think that a topic which she had always felt an unconquerable reluctance to enter upon, was at length introduced, and finally discussed, without
the

the distressing circumstance of premeditated preparation being necessary ; so true is the general observation, that "*ce n'est que le premier pas qui cont.*"

Though we have formerly shewn that De la Ville's political creed had latterly undergone a revolution, it was also observed that a disposition so weak, so instable, and so vain as he possessed, was not to be long depended upon, if it could be made appear that either interest or personal consequence was to follow a change.

Austin Marat had minutely studied his versatile character, was intimately acquainted with every secret spring of the restless machine, and perfectly knew how to turn the whole to the best advantage.

That quarter of the Castle in which De la Ville had chosen his own apartments, lay at a distance from the rooms appropriated to the reception and entertainment of strangers ; it moreover enjoyed the benefit of a private entrance, by which visitors might be conveniently admitted without running any particular risk of discovery, if secrecy was deemed necessary at the time.

Austin (who had formerly been entrusted with a key to this passage), in consequence of a late conference with his uncle, determined once more to
make

make use of it, in order to try what could be done by words, where actions had proved so unsuccessful. Spies, placed for the purpose of intelligence, had long lurked in the environs, and related their different observations to their unprincipled employers.

Under such circumstances it is not to be supposed that the extraordinary alteration, which had taken place in the conduct of Madame, could possibly pass unnoticed by emissaries, professedly sent to Narbonne with the design of watching every occurrence; for which they were paid in proportion to its relative importance with the nefarious intentions of those who required their service.

The field of conjecture and astonishment this information opened to their view, is not to be described! "If the Countess de Narbonne ventured thus publicly to evince her dereliction from the system of conduct in which she had hitherto so long persevered, it was next to a certainty she must be well convinced that proper, though secret measures were taken to support her in so flagrant a change of opinion, and ensure her safety in the practical prosecution of those new-adopted plans of proceeding, which, from De la Ville's present residence in the Castle, it was likewise clear he either sanctioned with voluntary approbation, or else was deceived

deceived into the appearance of it by those interested in the imposition, and whose superiority in mental abilities enabled them to represent matters in their own colours to the vain and credulous master of the Castle. In short, from whatever source this inexplicable alteration originated, the fact could not be too soon ascertained, and prudent means fallen upon to counteract any evil tendency of which it might be productive."

Thus argued the two Marats; vice is naturally suspicious, and like the thief in Shakespeare; "they thought every bush an Officer."

Public and private interest was indeed almost equally concerned in the investigation of the truth at this juncture. The treasure drawn from Narbonne, through the medium of De la Ville's vanity, had hitherto been of much service to the National Assembly, the members of which had seldom found themselves in more want of a fresh supply to oil the wheels of Government than at present. In addition to this circumstance, Marat never lost sight of individual interest, whose craving appetite he was secretly determined to satisfy, at the expence of every other consideration, whenever a safe opportunity favoured the design. At present the same causes still existed, as heretofore, to prevent quitting Paris; and as De la Ville's friends continued
to

to preserve their preponderancy in all political transactions, he dared not irritate them by striking any decisive stroke on the occasion, particularly as he was not ignorant that suspicions of his intentions in regard to their relation, were entertained by several of the number, who, he had reason to believe, kept a watchful eye upon his actions in that quarter.

It was a notorious trait in this man's character, that, however barbarous and sanguinary where the fate of a fellow-creature was in question, no person could be more anxious about his own, or more careful to preserve himself from every species of probable danger. Of course, though long determined (if not totally incompatible with that first, and most consequential of all considerations) to render himself master of the Countess and her much-coveted possessions, he still judged it prudent to let others feel the way for him; and Austin (his never-failing double on all such occasions) again undertook the office of *jackall* to his ferocious, yet pusillanimous uncle.

In the execution of this embassy, he acquitted himself with his usual adroitness; and during the term of De la Ville's confinement to his chamber, lost no opportunity of acquiring his former influence over the weak and imbecile mind of his
unfuspicious

unsuspicious dupe, to whom he held out the most dazzling prospects of aggrandizement, and every other bait particularly calculated to secure him once more in their interest.

He was not long in perceiving that, fascinated by the very trifling attention which the Countess now sometimes condescended to shew him, her husband seemed inclined to coincide with the smallest hint of her wishes on any subject whatever: he saw too, from the whole tenor of his conversation, that M. de Clermont was likewise a formidable rival to his views; and his confidential spy had informed him of St. Julian's continued residence, together with the favourable light in which he was regarded by the inhabitants of the Castle.

A combination of so many important and extraordinary circumstances indicated "more than met the eye," and predicted that some movement of unusual importance, on the part of the Royalists, was either in contemplation, or already concluded upon.

Austin knew the settled aversion of the Countess to her Republican husband was too deeply founded to change with any short-tried alteration in his sentiments; and, therefore, he was convinced some momentous reason dictated her present conduct: he feared her influence over this husband's mind

might counteract that which he was himself endeavouring to render stationary in behalf of his uncle. To prejudice him against the Countess was, therefore, considered as a preliminary step to his own security, and every engine was accordingly put in motion for that purpose.

The predilection she evidently expressed for the young soldier not only supplied a pretence for this undertaking, but seriously alarmed him on his uncle's account; for he began to suspect (by the intimacy which obviously subsisted between them), that as soon as De la Ville was otherwise disposed of, Madame was either to bestow her hand upon him or some of the other chiefs of the Royalist party. This was a stinging reflection if such a conclusion was destined to terminate all his labours, and proved a spur to his actions, as its probability increased from the observations which occurred in his daily, but invisible remarks upon her conduct. These apprehensions were at length almost converted to certainty by their last excursion to the recess, where, from an accidental discovery of their route, he had contrived to trace their steps; and though forced to retire for a period of some length, on account of the appearance of old Bertram near the spot, he had yet so managed as to keep them in view, till surprised at the prolongation of the

télé-

tête-à-tête, he seized the first moment of Bertram's absence, to steal softly to a small window on the side next the chapel, at which he happened to place himself at the critical instant, when St. Julian was kissing the hand of the Countess, and the latter pressing St. Hypolite's picture to her heart, after having gazed upon it and the kneeling figure before her with tears in her eyes, accompanied by the most interesting expression of countenance, in which traces of tender emotion were strongly portrayed.

Such a discovery was worth millions; and Austen, who had already begun to play his batteries on this apparently vulnerable quarter, now, under cover of night, fled to the invalid, and related the whole scene, with every auxiliary aid from exaggeration, which his prolific genius for mischief could possibly furnish.

De la Ville, who alternately gave the Countess credit for every virtue, and listened to her calumniator, according to the ability of the last visiter, and the management with which they flattered his predominant passion, remained long fluctuating between the persuasive, though still dignified manners of the one, and the artfully administered assertions of the other; till it was at length determined

that, as the *fête* formerly given, by the advice of Marat, had procured the attainment of some serviceable pieces of intelligence, so might a masked ball, within the walls of the Castle, be now announced with probable advantage: in which case De la Ville would have an opportunity of making his own remarks, without endangering his now convalescent state by any improper exposure of himself to the open air during the damps of the evening.

This matter fairly settled, and cards of invitation prepared for the neighbouring families, the master of the Castle undertook to make the requisite communications to its present inhabitants, while his counsellor returned to Paris, in order to acquaint his uncle with the existing position of his various manœuvres, and arrange the mode of their future execution under the auspices of so able a director.

Soon after Austin's departure, St. Julian received a summons to attend Charette, but promised to join them in a few days again.

On the following morning Mr. Hastings returned from the secret expedition he had made, in order to settle matters for the projected emigration. His efforts, in this respect, it appeared had been so far successful, as even to exceed the most sanguine expectations of his friends; but he informed them, as

too great a number being missed at one period of time, might probably occasion a spirit of enquiry inimical to the full completion of their views, it was his advice to effect their escape more gradually; and agreeable to that opinion, a small vessel would be at the back of the rock on the following evening, in which he wished Victorine immediately to embark for England.

After a short consultation, this plan was agreed to; and while M. de Clermont (who had previously determined to remain in France, for the present, with his wife and younger daughter) repaired to De la Ville's apartment, with the design of turning his attention from their motions, the Countess and Charlotte, assisted by Margaretta and her husband, removed that part of the treasure from the rock to the cottage, which was destined to accompany the offspring of Joseph the Second to the peaceful shores of Cumberland. When the little vessel afterwards approached, and came to an anchor in its allotted station, Hastings and Montague took the direction of conveying it on board, where it was stowed in different quarters calculated for concealment. This duty was all performed under cover of night; aided by the friendly shades of which, the young and beautiful exile found herself in the trembling arms of the Countess, who (secretly acquainted

with her own determination to expire near the tomb of her first husband, and, therefore, sensible that the separation was to prove eternal in this world), felt herself hardly able to conceal the anguish of her bosom from those to whom she wished it should remain unknown; while the weeping Victorine, astonished at the excess of her emotion, endeavoured to administer consolation, by holding forth to her view the probable prospect of a speedy meeting under safer skies, and in happier circumstances; a species of comfort, that so far from producing the end for which it was intended, only served to increase that grief it vainly strove to mitigate.

At length they were forced from each other's arms; and Victorine, having previously taken farewell of the Lady Abbess, who permitted Agnes to follow her young and beloved mistress, embarked, accompanied by Louisa Clermont, who was introduced to her on the preceding day, in the view of attending her to England.

Mr. Hastings proceeded with them to a certain distance; when Victorine was agreeably surprised to find her old friend Madame de Montcalm, with one of her daughters, waiting to join them in their voyage to Britain. That lady had met with Mr. Hastings at a seaport town, where she was attempting to procure a passage to the same country; and
when

when entrusted with the nature of her design, he speedily arranged it with that degree of humanity which usually characterized all his actions.

We will now leave the emigrants to proceed on their voyage, and return to those left behind at the Castle of Narbonne.

CHAP. XVI.

“ It cannot be ! my senses all deceive me, -
“ And yet it is ! Oh ! let me gaze upon thee,
“ Recal each trace which marks thee for my own,
“ And gives me back the image of my heart.”

WHITEHEAD.

M. DE CORDET, happening to be absent, and detained on particular business in a distant province, did not receive the letters forwarded from Narbonne, relative to his daughter's purposed union with Mr. Montague, till a considerable period had elapsed after they were written.

This

This circumstance of course naturally retarding his answer, a silence so unaccountable occasioned no small degree of surprise at the Castle, and at length determined M. de Clermont to make some enquiry into the cause of it.

Having put this design in execution, and finished his second dispatch on the subject, he resigned his seat in Madame's library to Charlotte, who wished to address a few lines to her father by the same conveyance.

She was just preparing to close her epistle, when St. Julian again returned to the Castle, and joined her in his travelling dress.

The seal, formerly found by one of the domestics, lay on the table, near the silver writing standish of the Countess; and in rising to welcome the Chevalier, some papers were accidentally pushed aside, which threw it upon the floor.

St. Julian instantly stooped to lift it: she saw his colour change; he started back several paces, and uttering a sudden exclamation of surprise, betrayed by his looks an expression of the utmost astonishment.

Charlotte's curiosity was roused; she perfectly recollected the violent emotion with which this seal had been recognized by the Countess, and eagerly demanded the meaning of his present agitation.

"First tell me," cried the Chevalier, "from whence came this seal? Know you the arms engraven upon it?"

Mademoiselle de Cordet immediately related the manner in which it had fallen into Madame's possession, mentioned the sensations which it had produced in her bosom, and added, that the arms it exhibited were those borne by a dear friend of that lady, in whose fate she had been particularly interested.

"God of heaven and earth!" exclaimed St. Julian, striking his forehead with violence, and sinking into the nearest chair within his reach. "Can it be? — No!" continued he, after a temporary pause, rising again from his seat; "no! it cannot be—it is impossible!" and he traversed the room with an air of the strongest perturbation.

A mystery, of whatever nature, appeared now on the very brink of disclosure; and the mutual knowledge of the seal, alike possessed by this young man and Madame de Narbonne, in conjunction with many other concurrent circumstances, seemed to implicate them equally in the discovery.

Charlotte scarcely breathed; she sprung from the writing table. A solution of those inexplicable enigmas which had so long defied development, and
cruelly

cruelly tormented the unhappy Countess, was possibly dependant on the investigation which she trembled to make, lest some unforeseen disappointment should, as usual, ensue; but suspense was increasing to agony! She could bear it no longer, and her resolution was immediately taken.

The period, during which these reflections passed in her mind, was short—was instantaneous!—She seized hold of his arm, and emphatically requested to know what “*could not be?*” what “*was impossible?*”

St. Julian was now become something more collected; he took her hand, desired her to be seated, placed himself by her on the sofa, and proceeded to give the following explanation of his recent conduct.

“You are already acquainted with the principal incidents of my chequered life as formerly related to the Countess; and must therefore know that I have hitherto harboured no suspicion of possessing any title to a higher rank in society than the son of such humble parents could claim from his equals among the neighbouring peasantry.

“The few days I have lately spent with M. Charette has, however, inspired other ideas, and opened brighter prospects to my view. But should these prove visionary, unauthenticated by the test

of subsequent investigation—ah Victorine! then am I once more thrown at an insurmountable distance from happiness and you! then were it better, perhaps, the dazzling forms of illustrious birth and superior station had never ~~shone~~ before me with their flattering gleams of imaginary bliss, but real disappointment!”

St. Julian hastily quitted his seat, traversed the room again in a hurried, agitated manner, returned to it, and again continued his narrative, of which we shall now give the substance in as few words as possible.

It seems a suspicious looking man had been observed for some time lurking in the vicinity of the Royalists; and having been seized for the purpose of examination, several articles of value were found upon him, of which he refused to give any account unless to M. St. Julian, or the Commander in Chief of the Army. He was, therefore, with his treasure, carried before the latter, and being closely interrogated on the subject, acknowledged, with many marks of the sincerest contrition, that “the jewels were not his own; that they had been too long detained from their right owner; and that he was in pursuit of that owner, when taken into custody, with the intention to restore them, in order to
make

make all the remaining reparation for the past which was now in his power to offer."

M. Charette then drew from him a further explanation of the affair, which bore every mark of a strict regard to veracity.

The prisoner said "that one stormy night, eighteen or twenty years before the present period, as he was in search of a stray sheep that had wandered from the small flock by which he got a scanty maintenance for the support of himself and his family, a feeble cry of distress reached him from an angle of the river; it seemed to be the voice of an infant, and, guided by the low murmuring sound, he pursued it, till something floating at the side of the stream caught his attention. This appeared to be a small basket, now entangled among the drooping branches of some willows, which here hung over the banks of the water; by these means it was obtained without much difficulty, and its contents were soon discovered to be a very fine male infant, which apparently had not been long in such a state, or else the basket, by continuing to float, preserved it from material injury, for it had suffered infinitely less than might reasonably have been expected from so perilous a situation.

"Along with this little creature were deposited the valuables now produced, with some changes of linen,

linen, and a sum of money in magnitude far more immense than any he had ever before met with. The latter was tempting; he was poor and needy; he removed the whole to his cottage; spread the riches, thus providentially obtained, before his wife; consulted with her on the next step to be taken; and, in short, found his portion of honesty inadequate to the conflict it had to support against the powerful attractions of so formidable an opponent. The jewels, of which he understood not the value, were carefully concealed, lest their discovery should lead to dangerous enquiries; while the money (which could not be so easily identified), was to be appropriated to the removal of those wants and distresses by which they had hitherto been oppressed. The mistress of the cottage had only increased her family by the birth of a little boy two days before this event took place; and whether the agitation, of which it was productive, or the cold caught by sitting up to examine their riches, had affected the child, is uncertain, but it was seized with convulsion fits, and expired before morning. The grief this incident occasioned gave a temporary interruption to the sensations of pleasure recently experienced; but the cause of those sensations, and the little orphan, who now claimed her sole attention, soon threw the veil of oblivion over irremediable

diable distresses, and fully supplied the place of the deceased in its parent's affections, who soon doted upon young Henry (as they named him) in a degree almost equal to any of their own children. In the meantime, however, the late acquired treasure did not afford all the gratification a first view of it had promised. Some little necessary purchases, which they ventured to make, had drawn both the observation and envy of their neighbours upon them; and they were consequently forced to act with the utmost circumspection.

“ At length, weary of continual restraint, they willingly agreed to the Count St. Julian's proposal, of taking Henry (now about six years old), as a little attendant and playfellow to his only son, who was nearly of the same age, and had already formed a strong attachment for the child, by having previously met with him in the pleasure grounds, where his reputed father sometimes was employed as a day-labourer.

“ Having thus disposed of the foundling in a way he conceived would be for his advantage, the man removed with his family to a distant part of the kingdom, where he speedily commenced a more comfortable style of living than had hitherto been adopted. But, alas! his charge lessened by degrees;
their

their children dropped off one after another, and finally robbed them of the name of parent, before many years of prosperity had passed over their heads. During this period, the nominal father of Henry failed not to make repeated enquiries after his enricher; and learned, with infinite pleasure, that his education and improvements were such as would not disgrace the first Nobleman in France. The man had not literally a bad heart; he rejoiced to think on this circumstance as some indemnification for having probably deprived him of his birthright, by the concealment that continued to be practised; and convinced that he would now be properly taken care of, gradually relaxed in the punctuality of his enquiries respecting him, till sickness, pecuniary losses, and constant grief for the deprivation of their children, at length sent the old woman to her grave—an incident which combined with the others to increase a degree of melancholy that had latterly seized his mind, and impressed it with an idea that all his recent misfortunes were the consequence of the injustice he had been guilty of to the child which accident had so miraculously thrown upon his protection.

“Fraught with this notion, and now filled with remorse for past errors, he set off for the residence of St. Julian, fully determined to make an explicit confession

confession of the whole, and restore what yet remained in his power, to the right owner.

“ But Henry was no longer to be found in the happy scenes of early youth ! Another Lord, and, ah ! how unlike his benefactor ! now reigned paramount over the rich domains where he had spent his infancy, and refused to answer any questions relative to the fate of the foundling. A vague report, however, was in circulation of his having joined the army of the Royalists, and to that quarter of the country where their chief force principally resorted, he consequently bent his steps, in hopes of easing his mind of that load of self-reproach which continually preyed upon its peace, and imbibtered every hour of existence. In the execution of this design many obstacles and difficulties occurred to retard its accomplishment ; and it was only after a considerable period spent in fruitless enquiry and fatiguing pursuit, that he had at length been in any degree successful.”

The prisoner here paused, and M. Charette again examined the jewels, which were now consigned to his care, and lay on a table before them. He then demanded if these were all of the kind that were found with the child ? and was answered in the affirmative, except one seal, which, by the description afterwards given him, St. Julian recognized

nized to be the same that led to the present discovery.

The poor man, it appeared, had been directed to the forest of Narbonne, as a likely place to find, or at least gain some intelligence of him he was in quest of; but having been disappointed in this expectation, he was proceeding for the same purpose to the Castle, and had seated himself on the ground to put the jewels in separate parcels, in order to shew them as occasion required, when a band of military men suddenly emerged from a thicket behind, and presenting their arms, with the tremendous introduction of "*Voilà les bayonettes!*" so terrified him for his own safety and that of his treasure, that the seal was unfortunately dropped in the precipitancy of his escape. The meanness of his appearance, however, evidently prevented any suspicion of the booty they lost; and the loud bursts of laughter which attended his flight, indicated rather a wish to frighten, than any more serious design, in the objects of his alarm.

Though the whole of this story was plausible, and carried apparent marks of authenticity, it was nevertheless possible that the jewels might have been obtained in a manner still more criminal, and the narrative contrived for the purpose of deception.

Charette

Charette therefore judged it proper to place a guard upon his motions, till the arrival of St. Julian afforded some further opportunity for ascertaining the truth of his deposition; and the Chevalier was of course immediately sent for.

Before he could reach the camp of his gallant Commander, however, the prisoner had contrived to make his escape, in consequence of the apprehensions entertained for his safety, which some pretty broad hints from the soldiers inspired, who (generally and warmly attached to St. Julian) conceived they could not treat a person, rumoured to have materially injured him, with too much indignity; and in pursuance of this idea, had given strong indications of a disposition to perform a summary act of justice on the offender.

St. Julian endeavoured to repair the effects of this ill-timed proof of regard, by attempting to discover the fugitive's place of concealment; but frustrated in his design, he was forced to renounce the farther prosecution of it at present, in compliance with the wish of Charette; who, from some private information received on the subject, requested him to return to Narbonne, and exert himself to retain his former influence over the facile, and (as it began to be feared) fluctuating mind of De la Ville; assuring him, in the meantime,

time, every possible measure should be employed to procure intelligence of his late nominal father, during his own residence at the Castle.

After finishing the recital of these particulars, the Chevalier next produced the jewels, which he determined should henceforth accompany him in all his future peregrinations, In the fond expectation of, some time or other, discovering his real parents by their assistance.

Charlotte eagerly viewed them one by one ; and the longer she looked upon them, was the more convinced that they were the very same as described by the Countess to have been deposited in the hands of her child's nurse, with the view of aiding to identify him hereafter, should any unforeseen occurrence render such a circumstance requisite, in consequence of being early considered as merely the son of a country peasant.

The suspicion now almost amounting to certainty, that he was, in fact, the long-lamented offspring of St. Hypolite and her much-respected friend, was, however, confined to her own breast ; till she anxiously enquired if a golden chain, with a locket attached to it, was worn by him, and so rivetted about his neck, as not to be removed by any perceptible method ?

St. Julian answered not, but opening his vest, presented it for her examination. All doubt was now at an end ! This trinket was of too singular a form to be mistaken, after what she had often heard Madame mention of its appearance.—Joy is sometimes as oppressive in its symptoms as grief. Charlotte felt a sudden faintness come over her heart, and had recourse to her smelling-bottle, as she dropped the locket on his breast, with an exclamation of animated rapture ; which soon brought on an explanation sufficiently calculated to inspire the young and now happy St. Julian with sensations of the purest delight and satisfaction.—

“ He was then ascertained to be the undoubted son of Madame de Narbonne ! the legal heir of these rich domains ! the representative of an illustrious family ! and, finally, an object no longer unworthy to aspire to the hand of his adored Victorine !!! ”——

So, in the fulness of youthful joy, mentally reasoned the ardent imagination of St. Julian ! But the ties of consanguinity, like those of moral justice, were no longer regarded by the new rulers of the land when interest or necessity required their subversion ; and the possessions he now began to consider as his future inheritance, were unhappily placed in both these predicaments, according to the opinion
of

of those who wished to have the entire disposal of them.

Astonishment, pleasure, and pain alternately vibrated on his feelings as the Chevalier received Charlotte's congratulations on this important discovery, and heard her briefly relate the leading events of his ill-fated parent's melancholy story. No indications, however, of the weak and frivolous conduct, frequently exhibited by inferior minds on similar occasions, disgraced the energetic character of St. Julian! His feelings were, nevertheless, certainly acute; but they were likewise dignified, manly, and perfectly congenial with the uncommon magnanimity that so eminently distinguished all his actions.

While discoursing on the properest method for breaking this momentous intelligence to the Countess, and entirely engrossed by the subject, the door of the library suddenly opened, unperceived by either of its present inmates; and Madame, who had just been informed of his return to the Castle, hastily advanced to welcome him.

In approaching the table, her eye glanced on the well-known memorials of other days. She started; her colour repeatedly varied; agitation shook her frame; and her aching eyeballs seemed bursting from their sockets as they fixed on objects so unexpected,

pected, so harrowing to remembrance. She sighed, staggered backwards, and was sinking upon the floor, when St. Julian (at first motionless from sensations of surprise and uncertainty how to conduct himself) sprang to her assistance, caught her in his arms, laid her gently on a sofa, and as he knelt at her feet, tenderly pressed her almost lifeless hands to his lips, with looks expressive of the most ardent filial affection; while the emphatical word "mother!" softly pronounced, in a voice scarcely articulate, from the variety of emotions which struggled for utterance, reached the ear, long deaf to mental consolation, and rivetted every idea on the attractive figure before her.

She raised her head from Charlotte's bosom, on which it reclined, again turned her eyes upon the jewels, then on St. Julian; and disengaging herself from the supporting arms of her whose persuasive eloquence had been employed in endeavouring to inspire sentiments of fortitude and composure, dropped on her knees at the side of the Chevalier, and clasping him in her arms, sobbed aloud, while her throbbing temples rested on his shoulder.

The relief derived from this burst of Nature came opportunely, and did more in her favour than all the rhetoric of the first orator could have accomplished.

The

The scene that now took place requires not the pen of description to do it justice; the heart of sensibility can alone portray its features in their genuine colours; to such we leave the delineation of it; other minds would not be able to comprehend the nicer shades of the painting.

Suffice it to say that certain measures were fixed upon for their future rule of conduct; and the delighted mother no longer wondered at her predilection in his favour, as she retraced that similitude to his lamented father in every look and movement, which had hitherto so inconceivably puzzled her to account for.

Finding, by some hints which incautiously escaped him, that the Republicans were supposed to be preparing for a renewal of hostilities, she speedily became as anxious to quit France as she had formerly, in secret, been averse to that project. But on the subject of engaging to accompany her, St. Julian was alone inflexible, and proof against all the arguments she could urge for the purpose:—he conceived his character at stake to see the end of the contest, and positively refused to be separated from his gallant Commander when approaching danger was at hand, even though the possession of Victorine was held forth as a powerful auxiliary
to

to his mother's entreaties ; he therefore remained equally deaf to the fascinations of wealth, grandeur, love, and filial affection, when the good of his country was supposed to require his services, and honour demanded his attendance in the field of glory !

CHAP. XVII.

“ The scourge

“ Of the red world, destroyers of mankind,

“ The russian ravagers of earth ; and all

“ Beneath the smooth dissimulating mask

“ Of justice and compassion!

THOMSON.

“ Pleasure and revenge

“ Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice

“ Of any true decision.”

SHAKESPEARE.

IF Austin Marat's former observations on the conduct of the Countess and St. Julian appeared fraught with sufficient foundation for suspicion to build upon, that foundation was certainly not weakened

weakened on his return to the environs of the Castle by the succeeding attention bestowed on their motions; when, in the discharge of his *honourable* system of *espionage*, he secretly followed them through the labyrinths of the forest, and, like the devil in Milton, watched every opportunity to ruin and betray.

Unconscious, however, of human notice, they generally chose the most retired and unfrequented paths to the recess, or continued to retrace some favourite walk by moonlight; while, hanging on the arm of her son, the fond mother gave way to maternal tenderness, and dwelt upon the happy discovery of his existence so unexpectedly obtained, and the new prospects which opened to her view, in consequence of that interesting disclosure.

The imperfect and disjointed sentences which reached Austin on these occasions, were easily connected by his fertile imagination. The ardent and marked looks of Madame, as her eyes were continually turned upon this cherished resemblance of St. Hypolite often attracted his notice, and furnished, he conceived, a key to the whole of their proceedings, particularly when her former aversion to her present husband was recollected, together with some other circumstances of her private history not unknown to the nephew of Marat; from all of

which these conclusions were drawn, that her recent politeness (for it went no farther) was merely a piece of fine acting to obtain that degree of influence over the mind of De la Ville that was probably now found requisite to blind him to the duplicity of her own conduct, and the manœuvres of those she called her friends.

Appearances, it must be confessed, were undoubtedly against Madame de Narbonne and this young man, whom we shall still continue to mention by the name of St. Julian, that being the only appellation by which he can publicly be yet recognized, consistent with common prudence or safety, in the present situation of his affairs.

It is true, during those walks, when Austin had any opportunity of remarking their behaviour, or occasionally catching a word that might be twisted into two meanings, and rendered applicable to the one most congenial to his own views, they were generally accompanied by M. de Clermont, Charlotte, or the Englishmen; but this observation by no means altered his opinion:—on the contrary, it strengthened the previous belief that a transaction, inimical to the immaculate nature of *virtuous* Republicanism, was forming, and that the Countess, fascinated by the figure and character of the young Royalist, was preparing to aid the cause by the acquisition

acquisition of herself and the domains of Narbonne in favour of that party.

This idea, when first imparted to the elder Marat, acted as a fresh stimulus to those designs already on the tapis; and the dread of losing two objects of so much importance to his views as Madame and her princely possessions, were not the most comfortable of all human meditations. Austin's promised reward, in case of success, was instantly doubled; and, to do him justice, he seemed to have as good an inclination for mischief as any other agent whatever that could have been pitched upon for the office.

Ashamed to acknowledge that he had espoused the interests of the opposite party, and flattered by the idea he imagined his late colleagues still entertained of his extensive power and abilities, De la Ville, as we have already remarked, by degrees sucked in the essence of the poison thus artfully administered by this Republican politician, in a manner so imperceptible, that he had again returned to his former tenets some time before he even suspected those recently professed were eradicated in the smallest degree.

But if a dereliction of opinion cannot be effected by the conviction that a man is not only upon the

point of losing his wife and his fortune, but that his life is also to be sacrificed as a preliminary step to the deprivation, it must be allowed that no arguments more persuasive can easily be adduced in its excuse.

With whatever portion of Christian resignation most men might be enabled to sustain the first of these three circumstances, we pretend not to determine. For the two latter, however, De la Ville certainly entertained the warmest regard; and in proportion as their magnitude was compared with the danger he was taught to believe now threatened their safety, he conceived himself indebted to the inestimable friend who kindly offered his advice and assistance for their preservation.

It cannot be supposed wonderful that St. Julian, merely as an individual, independent of other considerations, should be no particular favourite with Austin Marat; for, besides that fire and water were not composed of more opposite qualities than the principles and natural dispositions of each, the latter had taken some offence at an order respecting his closer confinement when a prisoner, after the last engagement with Charette, which the Chevalier (in the execution of his duty) was under the necessity of enforcing. This circumstance, however, would

would probably have been no longer remembered when his emancipation from the power of the Royalists took place, had not the defeat of his attempt on the life of De la Ville been accomplished by the prowess of him who now seemed to reign paramount over them both in the Castle, and whose subsequent greatness was apparently destined to rise, like the phoenix, more resplendent from their destruction.

The approaching masquerade was therefore to decide which scale would henceforth be doomed to preponderate; and its commencement was consequently fixed for a distant day, in order that De la Ville might have a better chance of being sufficiently recovered from the effects of his indisposition, to take an active part in the intended sanguinary transactions of the period.

Meanwhile time glided along on golden wings with the now comparatively happy widow of St. Hypolite. It is true, she and her confidential friends were under the necessity of proceeding with the utmost caution; but the windings of the rock still furnished a place of security for their private conferences, and the saloon often witnessed the extent of maternal solicitude and affection, till the hours of night closed around, and warned them to return to the Castle.

During these stolen interviews, Madame de Narbonne seized every favourable opportunity for making the Chevalier acquainted with the history of his illustrious family and ancestors; while, warmed by the subject, the spirit of their young and gallant representative frequently burst forth, as she proceeded, in impatient denunciations of vengeance on the oppressors of his only surviving parent, in a manner that sufficiently bespoke his towering mind, and the indignant sense entertained of the injuries she had suffered.

With what fervour of entreaty has she not strove, on those occasions, to calm his agitation, and endeavoured (in conjunction with their other friends) to instil a necessary degree of caution, and impress the idea of bearance and forbearance on his perturbed mind!

To attempt the recovery of those treasures already in the hands of another master, and that master possessed of so many powerful connections in the National Assembly, was not to be thought of at present: but, to compensate in some measure for this deprivation of property, the Countess assured her son that the wealth she could still call her own, was more than competent to maintain him in a state of genteel independence with his Victorine, whose fate she solemnly engaged to unite with his,

his, provided he agreed to renounce his threatened revenge, and did not meditate any thing in opposition to the sentiments of his friends.

This was a prospect too flattering to resist ; and though the Chevalier positively refused to tarnish his honour by quitting Charette, even for so brilliant a temptation, yet where his own pecuniary interest was merely concerned, he found no difficulty in consenting to relinquish worldly grandeur, when put in competition with the view of rational happiness, and the peace of an amiable, but hitherto unfortunate mother.

Accompanied by Charlotte and Montague, the Countess, with her son, frequently passed an hour at the Convent ; where the good Abbess delighted to entertain the latter on every subject she thought would be most agreeable to discourse upon. She already experienced the affection of a parent for this young man, who, acquainted with his mother's obligations to her friendship, voluntarily engaged to procure Charette's protection for the Community, provided any event, hostile to their peace, should be threatened by the Republicans, while the army to which he belonged, was within the reach of rendering them assistance.

Upon retiring from the Convent, Madame and St. Julian, in their way round the rock, usually

repaired to the chapel, and left their two companions to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* either in the saloon or the grove near it.

In the awe-inspiring gloom of this religious edifice, amid the ashes of his progenitors, and the scene of his parents' unfortunate union, indefinable sensations swelled the bosom of their newly discovered relative, as, hanging on his arm, the deep sighs of the Countess intermingled with the hollow sound of their steps along the vaulted aisle which led to his father's silent abode.

There, while he leaned against one of the stone pillars, absorbed in pensive contemplation, Madame, watering the tomb of St. Hypolite with her tears, fondly dwelt upon the long-cherished remembrance of those virtues and accomplishments once so eminently possessed by him, whose mortal part was now consigned to kindred dust, and mouldering to its original nothing, beneath the stately monument that marked his place of rest!

Fascinated by the melancholy luxury of recollections, which the time and surrounding objects impressed upon their minds with additional interest, the mother and son often lingered over the scene till the mild and placid moon-beams, from the high Gothic casement, falling upon the hallowed spot that contained a husband and father's remains,
silvered

silvered the Parian marble with a softer shade of colouring, a more chastened hue !

During those moments of sweet, but saddened reflection, which are generally productive of virtuous and noble resolutions in hearts possessed of tender sensibility, St. Julian repeatedly swore to act through life in a manner worthy of the illustrious ancestors from whom he sprung.

With the secrets of the rock he was now likewise made acquainted, and, accompanied by M. de Clermont, went through the usual ceremony of inauguration ; after which, a present of considerable value was selected from the private depositories of the place, and forwarded to the hero of La Vendee in the name of the Countess, as some return for his great and unremitting attention to her son.

From the instinctive predilection so early entertained for the Chevalier, Madame was first led to behave with apparent, though distant marks of civility to De la Ville ; and the subsequent motives, which a discovery of her son's birth now furnished, rendering a continuation of the same conduct more than ever necessary, she had sometimes prevailed upon herself, with a degree of reluctance, which nothing but the exigencies of the period could possibly have conquered, to make personal enquiries

after his health, attended by M. de Clermont, for whom he still pretended to feel much esteem.

In the course of these short visits nothing, however, transpired to raise any suspicion of the recent change his sentiments had undergone. He was indeed under the influence of too able a master in the science of simulation and dissimulation not to have profited, in some measure, by the continual lessons received on the subject; and, though inferior in every respect to those who kept an eye on his movements, their caution and knowledge of his character were equally lulled asleep by an artful appearance of low spirits and continued indisposition, which were supposed to detach his thoughts from former pursuits, to serious ones of a more individual and self-interesting description. In this manner was the veil of deception effectually dropped over their usual penetration; and St. Julian himself, a dupe, like others, to similar pretences, and the goodness of his own heart, made such statements of the proceedings at the Castle, in his communications to Charette, that, for some time, not the smallest idea of their real nature was even suspected.

Thus weakly permitting themselves to be imposed upon by artifices, deep and premeditated it
is

is true, but against the consequences of which they ought to have been still on their guard, Madame at length began to flatter herself that Marat had become weary of ineffectual attempts to injure her, and no longer remembered, in the press of more important considerations, that the being yet existed, whose peace he had too successfully assisted to destroy;—she therefore gave way to new sensations of delight, and, in proportion as the above idea gained strength, every look, word, and action became more obviously favourable to that son, who was conceived by their enemies to possess an influence of a very different kind over the heart of his unsuspecting mother.

In spite of this ill-timed and fatal security, no doubt could, however, be harboured of the certain danger accruing from any projected design to reinstate him in the possessions of his forefathers, which would inevitably draw the whole vengeance of the National Assembly on their devoted heads. To secure him the independency she had recently promised, was therefore become doubly requisite; and the present juncture happening to prove propitious for the purpose, proper measures were accordingly taken for removing the portable treasure of the rock to England, where the Countess was at length prevailed upon to think of retiring; but

but this half-reluctant consent was only obtained, upon receiving the most solemn assurances from St. Julian of joining her and Victorine in that country, as soon as the particular duties of his situation in the army of the Royalists would permit him to emigrate with honour to his own character.

Having before given a decided negative to his mother's first proposal, relative to a final separation from Charette, this concession was considered as a point of some importance; but the condition annexed to its performance detracted, in some measure, she thought, from the merit of the partial compliance, for his acquiescence could only be secured by the express stipulation, on his side, that his mother should leave France immediately, where her safety must soon be unavoidably endangered by the nature of those hostilities which there was every reason to suppose would be speedily commenced between the contending factions that continued to divide their unhappy country.

If this proposition had been rejected by the Countess, her son declared his determined resolution of standing or falling on French ground, under the banners of his gallant Commander.

No choice therefore remained; and she was consequently prevailed upon to compromise the matter in his own way.

The

The affair being thus settled, a consultation was held respecting the proper mode to be adopted for its ultimate execution; and it was agreed that the vessel should hasten to the river, to receive the exiles and their riches, as opportunities might happen to offer for the removal of the latter from the Rock of Narbonne.

As the period allotted for the masquerade would probably be sufficiently engrossed, by its attendant circumstances, to prevent the inhabitants of the Castle from paying much attention to their movements, it was concluded to seize on the first favourable juncture during its continuation, to attempt the accomplishment of the projected scheme.

As vessels of small burthen were occasionally seen in this part of the river, no curiosity could possibly be excited by so common an occurrence. The boat employed to ply between it and the land, was one kept by old Bertram, for the ostensible purpose of fishing; but secretly retained for the service of those who happened to reside in the rock, with a view either to aid an escape when necessary, or to supply articles which could not be otherwise conveyed with safety to the interior of that place.

A late hour, on the night of the masquerade, was fixed upon for the private embarkation of the emigrants,

emigrants, as the least likely to produce an immediate discovery of their absence.

Meanwhile Mrs. Montague, broken-hearted and depressed by the unmerited misfortunes of early life, was again attacked by a return of symptoms which had more than once threatened her corporeal system with instant dissolution. The presence of her son of course became requisite, and he obeyed the summons with a melancholy presentiment that it would be the last she would ever send him.

The messenger, dispatched with the letters to M. de Cordet, had not yet re-appeared at the Castle; and the term of his inexplicable absence giving rise to various conjectures, it was at length judged proper to make a personal enquiry into the cause of this apparent mystery.

Charlotte, firmly determined not to resign her hand in marriage unsanctioned by parental approbation, had long refused to shelter the bias of inclination under the authority of an uncle's consent, which M. de Clermont would willingly have accorded, if Montague could have prevailed upon her to accept of it, for the purpose of uniting their fates; but her resolution on this head remained immovable.

Solicitous to bring the matter to a crisis before she attended the Countess to Britain, M. de Clermont,

Clermont, during Montague's absence, proposed she should herself repair to her father, and lay her future prospects before this respectable parent, whose approbation she was so anxious to obtain.

To obviate any apprehensions entertained for the safety of a young and beautiful woman travelling alone, through a tract of country liable to all the devastating horrors of civil war, this kind and considerate relative offered his services to conduct her to the neighbourhood of Caen, from whence he would return again to the Castle of Narbonne, where no doubt was admitted of her being able to rejoin them before the period marked for their departure was expired.

This arrangement was joyfully acceded to by his niece; and she reached the residence of her father in safety a few hours after M. de Clermont took the road back to Narbonne.

But what was the agony of her soul on discovering that the house she now entered, was inhabited by strangers, and her father consigned to imprisonment in a distant part of the country!!

Sick at heart, shocked, and confounded by intelligence so unexpected, yet eager to mitigate his sufferings, she immediately flew to his assistance; and, having encountered innumerable difficulties in the attempt, had afterwards the mortification to
find

find herself sternly refused the poor gratification of administering even that melancholy piece of duty, by the unfeeling barbarians to whom she applied for permission to enter his dungeon! All she could learn on the subject were repeated confirmations of the inhuman treatment he experienced, and that his confinement was effected in consequence of an order received from the elder Marat, who had denounced him in the National Assembly as an object of suspicion.

No longer able to struggle with the complicated sensations of fatigue, disappointment, mental anguish, and indignation, rage, at times, almost swelled her heart to bursting, as she recollected the atrocious circumstances of this man's former conduct to the Countess, compared them with what she now suffered herself on her father's account, and listened to those details of his unparalleled villany which reached her in timid whispers from every quarter. Her blood became inflamed; her head, her limbs were racked with the most excruciating pains; and before the second morning after her arrival, a delirium seized her brain, which, for a considerable period, totally absorbed every remembrance of the past or present cause that had reduced her to so distressing a situation.

Meanwhile

Meanwhile an incident occurred at the Castle, which occasioned no small apprehension to some of its inhabitants.

De la Ville's nocturnal companion was accidentally observed entering his apartment at a late hour, and recognized by the *maitre d'hôtel* for Austin Marat! To increase the dismay produced by this discovery, St. Julian received dispatches from M. Charette, requesting his return to the camp, as an attack was now certainly expected on the side of the Republicans. This summons was accompanied by a letter to the Countess, in which the Commander of the Royalist army politely assured her that every possible attention should be paid to the welfare and safety of her son, as far as the particular nature of the service would permit; and after mentioning his regret at being under the necessity of recalling him, concluded by using every argument most likely to reconcile her mind to an event equally painful as unavoidable, in the present state of affairs.

The period marked for the Chevalier's return to quarters was, however, extended to its utmost limits by the friendly indulgence of his generous Chief, and consequently would not take place till after the conclusion of the now fast approaching festivity. The circumstance of his recal, though
it

it might reasonably have been expected, was yet severely felt by Madame; but as Austin's re-appearance at the Castle convinced her the dæmon of mischief was again busy in preparing some new work of destruction, and being ignorant how far the knowledge of the Chevalier's actual existence might have transpired (a discovery which she had every reason to apprehend would speedily accelerate the bloody stroke of his father's assassin), this unhappy mother, conceiving his life less endangered under the eye of Charette than where exposed to the diabolical machinations of secret treachery, now became as anxious for his departure as she had formerly been to retain him at the Castle; and, with all the energy of maternal distraction, urged M. de Clermont and Mr. Hastings to have everything prepared for quitting France at the appointed period, as no rhetoric whatever could prevail on St. Julian to depart till such time as he saw her fairly embarked for England, and beyond the reach of those enemies who had so long, so perseveringly pursued her, and who, there was much reason to believe, were then engaged, under the shelter of her own roof, in some nefarious transaction inimical to herself, and all those for whose safety she was most solicitous.

During this critical period Charlotte's continued silence perplexed and confounded her friends at
Narbonne.

Narbonne. The Countess and M. de Clermont had repeatedly written to Caen without being able to procure the smallest return to their enquiries. In fact, those to whom they addressed themselves for information, were no longer to be found in that quarter of the country, the reign of terror having dispersed them, like many others, in search of a safer residence. No satisfactory explanation could therefore be obtained by this mode of application; and the morning of the masquerade found them equally uncertain of her fate, as agitated by the approaching period which was destined to determine their own.

CHAP. XVIII.

“ A bloody tyrant, and a homicide,
“ One rais’d in blood, and one in blood establish’d ;
“ One that made means to come by what he hath,
“ And slaughter’d those who had the means to help him:

....

“ Ere the bat hath flown
“ His cloister’d flight ; ere to black Hecate’s summons
“ The shard-born beetle, with his drowsy hums,
“ Hath rung night’s yawning peal, there shall be done
“ A deed of dreadful note !”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE dawn of this eventful day commenced with every propitious symptom for the projected emigration. The wind was favourable for England ; the
treasure

treasure embarked, and the intended exiles, eager to escape from the land of Republican liberty and Marat, looked forward with anxious solicitude to the moment of their departure, which the increasing rumour of threatened hostilities urged them to accelerate with all possible dispatch, lest public commotion should authorize private treachery, and finally give a fatal termination to their views of future security and peace.

Madame de Narbonne passed a considerable part of the forenoon in the Convent; and the hour that separated her from its friendly and respectable Superior, appeared equally bitter with that in which she was torn from the best of mothers.

But the succeeding scene at the tomb of St. Hypolite soon effaced every former one from present recollection. No human eye, however, was permitted to witness this last solemn, solitary, and affecting farwel; and St. Julian had thrice gently wrapped at the door of the chapel before he could prevail on his agitated, weeping, but silent mother to accompany him back to the Castle.

The company were now fast assembling from all quarters, while noisy gaiety marked the restless votaries of pleasure, as their jocund voices mingled with the notes of the loud sounding instruments that reverberated through the spacious and lofty

apartments. No apprehended hostilities, no fears for the future, in short, no apparent recollection of national evils seemed, for a single moment, to intrude on remembrance with one corroding idea sufficiently strong to damp the ardour of present enjoyment. The lights, the music, the variety of splendid dresses every where captivated the senses, and inspired the mind with delightful images, calculated for the appropriate amusements of the evening.

With a heavy heart, and thoughts ill adapted to the place, Madame found herself under the necessity of joining the motley assemblage.

It was requisite to make De la Ville and his confidential friends acquainted with the habits worn by herself and her companion.

Proper measures for this purpose were accordingly taken, and they were not long in perceiving themselves honoured with particular marks of attention.

By degrees the numerous groups of masks became visibly more interested in their different pursuits, till, at length, the greatest part of the company seemed absorbed in a vortex of dissipation and folly, too intense to admit of observation on any subject foreign to self-gratification.

This

This was exactly the very point of time which the watchful emigrants waited for. Margaretta was already on board; and her husband, accompanied by Agathe, attended their Lady's arrival at the back of the cottage, where the boat lay prepared to convey them to the vessel. De la Ville and the mask, supposed to be Austin Marat, proved no longer any restraint on their motions, for they had both unaccountably disappeared from the apartments.

The signal was given; Mr. Hastings and the Countess hastily threw off their masquerade dresses, under which others were worn apparently better calculated for the purpose of concealment. St. Julian partly changed his. The latter placed the trembling arm of Madame within his own; and as they stole through the more distant shrubbery, endeavoured to calm the perturbation of her mind by the tenderest expressions of affection, accompanied with every assurance of protection most likely to have that effect. Mr. Hastings supported her on the other side; and though a bright moon partially darted her silver rays from occasional openings in the almost impervious foliage, they passed the middle of the forest, and rapidly advanced to its opposite verge, without encountering the smallest impedi-

ment to their progress ; a circumstance productive of much pleasure to the little party, who secretly hailed it as a propitious omen of future success to the undertaking.

Alas ! they suspected not at the moment that the jealous eye and bloody hand of vengeful treachery had so far smoothed their way, merely to render the perpetration of premeditated mischief more secure from the chance of casual interruption !

In winding through one of the most unfrequented paths of the forest, a rustling sound unexpectedly startled them. St. Julian turned hastily round, and saw a moonbeam glittering on a half-drawn sword, which the thick overshadowing branches almost in the following second excluded from further observation.

His resolution was instantly taken ; he snatched a whistle from his vest, in the form of a small bugle horn (one of which the Royalists usually retained in their possession), and made it re-echo through the forest ! The Countess uttered a piercing exclamation of terror at the sound, and clasped her son to her breast as she threw herself between him and the apprehended danger. In the next moment several armed ruffians rushed from behind some thick underwood, and before St. Julian could get disengaged

disengaged from the convulsive grasp of his fainting mother, he found himself furiously attacked from every quarter.

At this critical juncture the well-known signal was fortunately answered by one of a similar description; and a small body of men, cautiously emerging from the neighbouring caverns, advanced to his relief just as two of the assailants were bearing away the Countess, whom Hastings had been vainly endeavouring to protect from their violence; and the Chevalier, exhausted by fatigue, wounded and bleeding, felt himself almost unable to struggle any longer against a superiority of numbers so unequal, whose principal force was evidently levelled at his safety.

The scale of victory was now beginning to turn, and the enemy, in proportion as they perceived it, maintained the conflict with additional fury.

During this period one of the latter was observed to keep at a convenient distance from the combatants, and more by words than actions encouraged the others to execute summary justice on him, whom he styled "the dishonourer of his wife, and the mean betrayer of her husband's ill-placed confidence."—Too much agitated to recollect that his voice might discover him, though his face was masked, the valiant but prudent orator was easily

recognized for the Lord of the Castle; and soon afterwards reduced to the mortifying necessity of making a quick retreat with the remainder of his myrmidons, who fled from the field of battle with the utmost precipitation and dismay.

Still insensible to all that was passing near her, the Countess sat motionless on the ground, supported by a soldier, to whose care Hastings had latterly been forced to commit her. This man, happening to be wounded by one of the retreating banditti at the commencement of their flight, could now scarcely prevent her from sinking entirely upon the earth. The low and hollow groans, which at intervals heavily proceeded from her overcharged bosom, were the sole remaining proofs of an existence which seemed gradually verging to a close.

“Take care of my mother!” cried St. Julian, as the melancholy sound struck upon his heart, “support my mother!” and the little band crowded round her, as they returned from pursuing the fugitives a few paces from the scene of action. Mr. Hastings plentifully sprinkled her face and temples with some lavender he found in her pocket, which apparently revived her. In a few minutes she opened her eyes, cast a hasty glance of agonized enquiry on the by-standers; and not perceiving her son in the circle, wildly called upon his name in a voice

voice almost inarticulate, from excess of terror and maternal apprehension.

The soldiers instantly wheeled about, and beheld their beloved Commander half reclined against a tree, where, pale, languid, fainting, and covered with blood, he leaned upon his still reeking sword, over which he seemed to bend in extreme agony. At the sound of his mother's voice he feebly raised his drooping head, and attempted to move forward; but corporeal ability was wanting to second the filial intention! A deep groan burst forth at the fatal conviction; he fixed his closing eyes on his miserable parent, staggered a few steps from the tree, again groaned, and in the following moment lay extended on the ground before her!—The fight proved too much to be supported; she was instantly seized with a succession of fainting fits; and a sudden alarm being given by one of the men, that another party of the assailants was supposed to be approaching, the mother and son were speedily borne in this melancholy condition to the vessel, where their arrival had been impatiently expected for some time. The bleeding body of St. Julian was laid upon a bed in one of the little cabins, and Madame consigned to the care of her weeping nurse and Agathe.

Mr. Hastings then sent a verbal message by one of the soldiers to M. de Clermont; and hastily emptying the contents of his pockets among the faithful Vendéans, who preserved the most affecting and solemn silence as they gazed upon the pallid countenance of their young and gallant Officer, ordered the boat to convey them back again, and immediately retired from the deck.

The whole of this unfortunate transaction had been so suddenly commenced and concluded, that before the tumult of Mr. Hastings's mind had in any degree subsided, the vessel was already under weigh, and proceeding on her voyage with a favourable wind for England.

Every thing relative to their projected design having been previously arranged in so able a manner as to ensure an apparent probability of success to the undertaking, little apprehension had been entertained, by the intended emigrants, of its failure. Under this impression they had declined M. de Clermont's attendance, who wished to witness their embarkation, lest his actual presence on the occasion, if afterwards discovered, might endanger his own safety and that of his family, without being of any material service to those for whom he risked so considerable a stake. By remaining in the Castle
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the case was different; there he might be of use, by keeping an eye on any occurrence likely to affect them; while, at the same time, no injury could accrue to himself from such a mode of proceeding. He therefore endeavoured to make his appearance as conspicuous as possible, and took every opportunity that offered for this purpose, in order to do away any suspicion (if such were entertained) of his late active conduct in the business.

Unfortunately the soldier entrusted with Mr. Hastings's message, met with an accident which prevented his reaching the Castle.

Mr. de Clermont, of course, remained ignorant of the late fatal transaction in the forest; but, conceiving the attempt must finally prove successful, contented himself with the expectation of receiving intelligence to that purport from England, and turned his attention to other objects.

No sooner was Madame's absence announced on the following day, than De la Ville pretended to be absorbed in the deepest affliction for her loss; and messengers were dispersed in various directions to procure information of her destiny. Mr. Hastings had previously made no secret of his intended departure from Narbonne; therefore that circumstance could not create much surprise, particularly as his visit was already protracted consi-

derably beyond its original term. The disappearance of the Countess, however, seemed to be the sole object which engrossed her husband's thoughts at this juncture, and apparently affected him to such a degree, as to render society oppressive; in consequence of which he declared himself much indisposed, and continued to remain in his own apartment. In fact, this statement of the case was not very remote from the truth; De la Ville had received a wound from one of the Royalists during his flight, which was now become so extremely painful, that he no longer found himself able to leave his chamber without risking a discovery of the real nature of his illness. Besides, he had lost his counsellor, Austin Marat, in the late affray, and knew not how to proceed in the present hurry of his spirits; therefore, under the semblance of anxiety on Madame's account, it was judged best to conceal his wound and his perturbation in the retirement of a sick room, till the incidents of the foregoing night were more fully ascertained, and it was better known how he ought to conduct himself in future.

After what has already appeared on the preceding subject, we presume it is unnecessary to add that the Marats were the secret projectors of the nefarious

rious affair in the forest, where Austin's life justly paid the forfeit of their villany.

M. de Clermont seized the period of De la Ville's indisposition to remove with his family from the Castle; and after spending some time in domestic arrangements of importance, he formed the resolution of proceeding to Caen, in order to make personal enquiries respecting the fate of M. de Cordet and his daughter.

About this period Mrs. Montague paid the great debt of nature at Rochelle, where she had long fixed her residence; and with her dying breath requested her remains might be interred in the same vault with those of her father, in the south of England. Solicitous to pay the most minute attention to every wish of this unfortunate parent, Montague determined to accompany them thither, in compliance with a delicate hint she had dropped on the subject; and wrote to acquaint Mr. Hastings with his design of returning by Caen, for the purpose of waiting upon M. de Cordet, and conducting Charlotte back to Narbonne.

The mysterious disappearance of the latter had hitherto been carefully concealed from her lover, whose consequent distress (if informed of it) would have been dreadfully aggravated by the impossibility of leaving his dying mother in her last

moments, to make enquiry after the destiny that had befallen his beloved Charlotte.

The letter intended for Mr. Hastings happened to lay several days at Rochelle after Montague's departure; and when at length it reached the Castle, De la Ville, to whom it was delivered, threw it by as a matter of no consequence.

Meanwhile one of the soldiers, who had been engaged with the assassins, and an eye-witness of all that afterwards followed, obtained a temporary permission to quit his station in the neighbouring caverns of the forest, in consequence of a severe wound received at that period. This man therefore returned to his friends, till a state of convalescence once more enabled him to bear the hardships incident to the military profession. The home to which he repaired, happened to be the very house where Charlotte now resided, and was placed in the vicinage of her father's dungeon, where she had never yet been allowed to enter. In spite of this vexatious circumstance, however, youth and a good constitution stood her friends, and she was nearly restored to her usual portion of health, when the sick and debilitated Royalist attracted her notice.

The man left the environs of Narbonne strongly impressed with the absolute certainty that Madame
and

and his late gallant Commander had both breathed their last. This idea, therefore, he now made no difficulty of asserting for a fact; and indeed those circumstances which came under his own knowledge, naturally led to such a conclusion.

The mangled body of Austin, which was discovered and recognized on the spot where he fell, together with several corroborating rumours then afloat among the Royalists in that quarter, gave room to believe that the elder Marat (to whose diabolical contrivance the whole affair was ascribed by the foldier) must likewise have been present, and aiding on the occasion. To this detail, sufficiently irritating of itself, many additional ones of the most aggravating description were given respecting the atrocities committed by these two inhuman wretches; and Charlotte instantly perceived the fatal cause why those letters addressed to the Castle, since her recovery, still remained unanswered—an incident which had hitherto created no small astonishment. Her frame shook with agitation as the dreadful explanation of this mysterious silence flashed conviction of the true source from whence it proceeded.

She enquired, in a voice of the utmost perturbation, for the Chevalier Montague?—The soldier knew nothing about him; “but he might possibly

be among the number of the slain, as several had fallen on both sides during the conflict."—The former and recent sufferings of the Countess, those her father still groaned under, the death of St. Julian and his beloved mother, with the probability of a similar fate having likewise decided the destiny of her affianced husband, and, by that means, closed all her own future prospects on earth, formed a dreadful combination of evils, which presented themselves in terrific array before her, and seemed an assemblage too horrid for the human mind to contemplate without injuring its mental faculties. The solemn pause that succeeded this heart-rending intelligence, gave the final colouring to the remainder of her life: her usual fortitude apparently returned, and her mind, instead of yielding to the force of accumulated wretchedness, at once seemed to rise superior to the inflictions of the moment. No complaint was heard—no exclamation of sorrow—no imprecated vengeance burst from her lips!—her eyes, however, struck fire, and a settled expression of some feeling, too big for utterance, which evidently nerved every fibre with additional energy, was strongly portrayed on her animated countenance, and gave a sublimity to her whole appearance that conveyed the idea of a being more than mortal, as she emphatically ordered the man to repeat
his

his melancholy story. Her colour repeatedly varied during the horrid recapitulation. When he ceased speaking, she seemed a second time absorbed in the most profound reverie, and her heart visibly throbb'd at intervals, even to a painful degree; still, however, a profound silence prevailed; then, all at once, elevating her hands and eyes to Heaven, she started from her seat, stopp'd, cast another ardent glance upwards, and suddenly rushed to her own apartment!

On opening the door at a late hour the following morning, the chamber was found to be empty. This circumstance occasioned no small surprise to the family, and the subsequent accounts received of her motions afterwards increased that surprise to sensations of the most impressive and awful description.

On quitting her lodgings before daybreak, Mademoiselle de Cordet took the direct road to Paris. The project that led her to the metropolis, though at first suddenly adopted, matured by degrees, and was fully systemized before the conclusion of her eventful journey.

Confined to a solitary sick room in the neighbourhood of her father's dungeon, whom she was not permitted to see, and individually smarting under the miseries which the unfeeling Marat had equally condemned

condemned her fellow-creatures to suffer—miseries that were often injudiciously detailed in her presence by the ignorant woman who attended her during her illness; no wonder if a mind like her's, so actively benevolent, so generous, and so warm, perpetually entertained on one subject, should at last become solely engrossed by its magnitude, and gradually begin to meditate on a proper remedy for the evil. Hitherto, however, no practical mode had occurred for its accomplishment, till the narrative of the soldier, by swelling every half-restrained passion into agony, seemed at once to open a glorious field for personal and meritorious exertions in the cause of insulted humanity.

From the beginning of the Revolution she had been accustomed to assimilate certain periods of ancient and modern history with those events daily passing before her; and, in conjunction with nearer considerations, produced by the fate of her friends, might probably be excited, by the examples of antiquity, to the commission of a deed which she believed, with the fond enthusiasm of an ardent disposition, was due to the sufferings of a father, and the memory of those victims heretofore immolated at the bloody shrine of Republican tyranny; a deed no less calculated to revenge the injuries inflicted on the beings dearest to her heart, than destined to deliver

deliver her unhappy country from the galling yoke of a monster, who was equally a disgrace to mankind, and the nation to which he belonged.

Thus uniting what she deemed an act of private retribution with sentiments of disinterested patriotism and the purest philanthropy, Charlotte remembered not that the executive part of justice is not permitted to the injured individual, whose fiat, in that case, would sometimes be apt to overleap the magnitude of the offence, and in the wild ebullition of passion, confound all sense of strict rectitude and impartial judgment in one self-impelled decision; while the consequences resulting from the sentence of such a tribunal would naturally prove destructive of personal safety, moral order, and all the forms necessary for the preservation of civil society throughout the universe.

But dangerous precedents frequently proceed from good motives; and the purity of those which dictated the *present*, can scarcely be questioned.

On her arrival in Paris, she repaired to the house of Marat, and demanded admittance to his presence. As she entered the door, several victims, consigned, by his order, to the guillotine, were conducted from the threshold in all the agonies of despair. She advanced forward; and while his unhallowed lips were yet uttering execrations against them,

them, drew a dagger from her bosom, purchased for the occasion, and instantly plunged it into his callous heart!!!

As the decisive blow was inflicted, she emphatically pronounced the name of "Madame de Narbonne!"—The devoted wretch started with a convulsive motion at the sound! He turned a wild and ghastly look of horror on her avenger—shuddered! groaned! and immediately expired!!

Thus fell, after a long and too prosperous reign over suffering mortality, and by a woman's hand, that Marat, who ought to have become a victim to public justice, and died, not in his closet, but on a common scaffold.

The deed was no sooner committed, than she firmly announced her name, surrendered herself a prisoner, and was conducted to the Abbaye, from which she was transferred to the Conciergerie, and brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

She acknowledged the transaction, and justified it by declaring that it was a duty she owed her country, and mankind in general, to rid the world of a monster, whose sanguinary doctrines were framed to involve the nation in anarchy and civil war; and asserted her right to put Marat to death, as a convict already condemned by the public opinion.

Her

Her deportment during the trial was modest and dignified. There was so engaging a softness in her countenance, that it was difficult to conceive how she could have armed herself with sufficient intrepidity to execute the deed. Her answers to the interrogatories of the Court were full of point and energy. She sometimes surprised the audience by her wit, and excited their admiration by her eloquence. Her face sometimes beamed with sublimity, and was sometimes covered with an air of indifference for life, which bespoke her mind prepared for whatever was to happen. At the close of the trial she took three letters from her bosom, and, presenting them to the Judges, requested they might be forwarded as directed. One of them was addressed to M. de Clermont, another to Montague, and the third contained an affectionate and solemn adieu to her father. She retired while the Jury deliberated on their verdict; and when she again entered the Tribunal, there was a majestic solemnity in her demeanour which perfectly became her situation. She heard her sentence with attention and composure, and left the Court with unaffected serenity, to prepare herself for the last scene.

She

She had concluded her letter to her father with this verse of Corneille :

“ C’est le crime qui fait la honte, et non pas l’échafaud.”

And it is difficult to conceive the kind of heroism which she displayed in the way to execution. The rabble, some of whom had assembled to insult her on leaving the prison, were awed into silence by her demeanour, while several of the spectators uncovered their heads before her, and others gave loud tokens of applause. There was such an air of chastened exultation thrown over her countenance, that she inspired sentiments of love rather than sensations of pity. She ascended the scaffold with undaunted firmness; and knowing that she had only to die, was resolved to die with dignity. The concluding act; therefore, closed agreeable to this idea; and the high-souled, lovely Charlotte de Cordet soon ceased to breathe for ever !!!*

Her corpse was buried in the church-yard of St. Magdelaine, near the grave of Louis XVI., she having been executed in the same section with that unfortunate Monarch.

* For most of the foregoing particulars of this affair, vide Miss Williams’s Letters.

Meantime

Meantime Mr. Montague performed the last duty to his mother, and saw her remains consigned to the family vault of her ancestors; after which, having made some necessary arrangements preparatory to conducting his intended bride across the Channel, he hastened back to France, and, full of youthful hope, and ardent expectation, soon reached the house once possessed by M. de Cordet at St. Saturnin. The doors of this habitation were now locked; and no human creature appearing to answer his enquiries, he instantly proceeded to Caen. On his arrival every tongue was occupied in talking over what had happened to their country-woman in Paris. He was at first thunderstruck; but finding no two persons related the story in the same manner, concluded the whole was possibly an unauthenticated rumour; and, with a beating heart, flew to ascertain its original foundation in the metropolis.

Madame Duval had not yet recovered the shock of her friend's premature death; he found her in tears, and confined to her chamber. She confirmed the dreadful intelligence, and when it was finished, presented the letter addressed to him by Charlotte.

Montague received this affecting token of remembrance in silence; tore it open with a trembling hand, perused the contents, struck his forehead
in

in an agony of despair, and sunk back on the sofa where he had thrown himself. In a few minutes he started up, snatched his hat from the table, and casting a mournful glance at the weeping mistress of the house, instantly rushed from the room.

The unhappy Montague hurried through several streets with a wild air of gloomy distraction, insensible to every passing object, and perfectly unconscious of his own movements.

At length, overcome by agitation and fatigue, he entered the open door of a coffee-house, and, staggering forward a few paces, dropped down on the floor. The people of the house crowded round him, and used proper means to restore suspended animation. This circumstance accomplished, he appeared more composed, and calling for pen, ink, and paper, desired to be left alone. His request was complied with, and he immediately began a letter to Mr. Hastings, in which the foregoing fatal event was briefly recapitulated, without taking the smallest notice of any determination relative to his own future destination. He then executed a settlement of his fortune on that gentleman, burdened with a considerable bequest to Madame Duval; and enclosing the whole under cover to the care of a mutual friend in England, directed the master of the coffee-house to see it forwarded by the first

first safe opportunity. This business finished, he took the road to the church-yard of St. Magdelaine, and his subsequent steps were, for some time, buried in impenetrable obscurity.

At length it was afterwards discovered that, under a fictitious name, he had fallen in the unfortunate affair of Quiberon, and expired at the side of the gallant, but ill-fated Count Charles de Sombreuil.

CHAP. XIX.

“ En adorant la Providence, il faut raisonner sur le rapport
“ des causes secondes avec leurs effets. L’homme le plus
“ religieux doit-il s’attendre à réussir par miracle, quand
“ il prend des mesures propres à le faire échouer ? ”

ABBE MILLOT.

IT is now time to enquire after the motions of the emigrants, whom we left on their voyage to England.

Madame de Narbonne continued in the most deplorable state for the first two hours succeeding their embarkation ; and repeatedly required all the strength of her attendants to prevent her from
rushing

rushing upon deck, from whence it was apprehended she meant to precipitate herself into the ocean.

Fortunately the master of the vessel had a brother in the medical line, who, after residing abroad for several years, had taken this opportunity of returning to his native country. He happened to be a man of much professional knowledge, and pursued such methods on the present occasion as were finally attended with the happiest success.

When the first violence of his patient's disorder apparently began to subside, Mr. Hastings retired from the cabin of the wretched Countess, and repaired to that where the body of poor St. Julian had been deposited by his weeping soldiers.

Here the silence of death reigned in melancholy solitude, and the vanity of human prospects was forcibly illustrated. With folded arms, and a sorrowing heart, he mournfully contemplated the sad reverse produced, in so short a period, in the condition of this once gallant, amiable, and accomplished young man!

The reflections which naturally succeeded placed the dreadful horrors of civil war in bloody array before his imagination, and an exclamation of anguish burst from his lips, as his eyes, emphatically raised to heaven, fell again on the pale object whose
early

early fate he so deeply deplored ; silent, and solemnly musing, he fixed an ardent gaze on the late animated, but now ghastly countenance which attracted his attention, and as he thus bent over him, "Unhappy mother ! miserable, Oh most miserable Madame de Narbonne !" was repeatedly uttered in the energetic tone of heartfelt commiseration. At the moment these exclamations were last pronounced, a faint sigh appeared to agitate the bosom of the Chevalier ! Mr. Hastings started !—"It could not be ! No, 'twas imagination, the illusion of fancy alone !" —Again, however, the same circumstance seemed to occur ! He tore open the vest of St. Julian, and, in much agitation, applied a trembling hand to his breast and heart ; the former was yet warm, the latter still beat !—"O God ! could it be possible ! was the Chevalier then really alive !" He flew from the cabin, beckoned Mr. Vernon from the bedside of Madame, and seizing him by the arm, instantly returned to the spot he had left in so much emotion. St. Julian was not dead !—The measures taken to ascertain his existence soon rendered this event no longer problematical ; but it was judged necessary to conceal the happy discovery from his mother's knowledge in her present weak situation, lest the effects of excessive joy should prove as detrimental in their consequences,

consequences, as the dreadful evils she had recently encountered.

Though attended, on a first inspection, with the most alarming symptoms, the wounds of St. Julian were found not to be mortal, and suspended animation seemed to have proceeded rather from the immense quantity of blood he had lost, than any occurrence of a more dangerous description. Youth, a good natural constitution, and the advantage of excellent chirurgical skill were all in his favour; and no fever being apprehended, Mr. Vernon ventured to pronounce him restored to a convalescent state before the expiration of the second day after their embarkation. This most happy reverse of circumstances was therefore cautiously communicated to the late sorrowing, but now transported mother. The scene that followed, like her last farewell at the tomb of St. Hypolite, is not to be described; for language would prove inadequate to do it justice. No argument, no entreaty, could henceforth prevail upon her to quit the bedside of this darling son for a single moment; she insisted upon attending him personally, and in the performance of this important office, seemed entirely to overlook all regard to her own debilitated state, and every recollection of former sufferings.

Meanwhile contrary winds springing up soon after they sailed, considerably prolonged the term of their voyage, and retarded its final accomplishment. Already had the vessel been forced to take shelter in two remote harbours, without daring to land at either; after which they were driven, by stress of weather, into a solitary bay, where they lay for some time, unable to struggle with the difficulties and dangers which surrounded them. At length the chalky cliffs of Albion appeared, and the emigrants gladly disembarked at the first port they reached, though at some distance from the spot of their original destination. Here it was found requisite for the invalids to remain a few days after the fatigues of their voyage; and Mr. Hastings, consigning them to the care of the friendly surgeon (who insisted upon seeing them to the end of their journey), proceeded himself to the North, in order to give personal directions for their reception, and prepare Victorine for the unexpected arrival of her lover. This event was not long in taking place. The impatient St. Cyprian (for we shall henceforth mention him by his proper appellation, all causes for the contrary having now finally ceased) would listen to no farther delay than what proved absolutely necessary for enabling the Countess and himself to continue their progress; and three weeks after

after landing in England, they found themselves, by slow stages, at their intended residence, under the hospitable roof of the invaluable Mr. Hastings; where Victorine and Madame de Montcalm, with two or three other emigrants, had already been inmates for some time. The former received her old friend, the Chevalier, with the mantling blush of virgin modesty; and the throb of renovated hope, united with unshaken attachment, swelled their faithful bosoms, as, folded in each other's arms, and kneeling at the feet of the now happy Countess de Narbonne, she poured a maternal blessing on their heads, and sinking on the floor at their side, alternately pressed them to her palpitating heart in the mute eloquence of tender affection and unutterable delight!—No remaining obstacles interfering to prevent the union of the lovers (the only surviving representative of the two noble Houses of Narbonne and St. Cyprian, being considered as a suitable match for the unacknowledged daughter of Joseph the Second), their fates were irrevocably united at the altar in a few days after the first interview had taken place; and the sensations of the young couple, on this completion of their wishes, were scarcely more exquisite than those at length experienced by the long suffering, but finally grateful and transported parent.

But the universal joy diffused by the conclusion of this event, was soon destined to meet with a temporary interruption. The gentleman, to whose care Montague's last letters were addressed, having learned the return of Mr. Hastings to his native country, immediately forwarded the packet to Cumberland; and the melancholy intelligence it contained, spread a general gloom over every countenance, while the heart of the weeping Countess (once more destined to be wrung with the deepest affliction), mourned for the premature fate of her young and beloved companion with an excess of sensibility that brought on a return of former complaints, and nearly reduced her to the verge of that grave, on the confines of which she had so frequently been placed by the shock of antecedent misfortunes.

This fatal information appeared to be felt by Mr. Hastings with an equal degree of acuteness, though accompanied with less alarming consequences to his health. On the union of Charlotte and his much-esteemed friend, Montague, he had fondly built an imaginary fabric of future felicity to himself, and the probable enjoyment of every consolation best calculated to smooth the pillow of declining age. That prospect was now for ever at an end, and rendered abortive too, by means that could neither have been foreseen nor suspected. But
instances

instances of disappointment attending the visionary views of worldly happiness, are too common to create lasting surprise; and this worthy man, however deeply he deplored the cause of their present distress, found himself unavoidably called upon, by the duties of his situation, for mental exertion, which he endeavoured to procure by the most unremitting attention to the sorrows of others, and continual attempts to restrain his own, till at length comparative tranquillity repaid his rational and benevolent efforts with a proportionable degree of success.

Unhappily, however, the shock recently received, in conjunction with former trials, long united to retard Madame de Narbonne's entire restoration to health; and in addition to other vexatious circumstances, St. Cyprian did not appear to gain those advantages from ease, care, and attention, that might naturally have been expected; for though his wounds were now closed, one only excepted, he still remained in a weak state, and suffered much pain occasionally from the effects of cold, or any casual fatigue. His intention, therefore, of returning to the Continent was found impracticable at this period, and every idea of it renounced accordingly.

It was judged necessary, however, to acquaint Charette with the cause of his absence; and before the circumstance, from whence it proceeded, had materially changed for the better, the Vendean Chief was, alas! no longer in a way to require his services, and the army of the Royalists nearly annihilated!—St. Cyprian, therefore, agreed to the wishes of his wife and mother, by consenting to reside in England, where, in process of time, he and the latter were happily restored to health and tranquillity.

The two principal reflections which now interrupted their peace, originated from anxiety for the fate of their friends in France; and the daily obligations incurred to Mr. Hastings by remaining his guests, and partaking of his hospitality, when conscious of their ability to form a splendid establishment of their own. Nevertheless, every objection to continuing under his friendly roof had hitherto been overruled by their worthy entertainer, till the reception of letters from abroad, mentioning the probable arrival of the Lady Abbess and several of the Nuns, as an event at no great distance, determined them immediately to procure a situation more calculated for the accommodation of so great an addition to their family. Fortunately the difficulties that occurred on this occasion were soon

soon obviated, by that general leveller of all difficulties, *a round sum of money!*

A fine estate in the neighbourhood, to which was attached a large and commodious mansion, with a venerable looking old Abbey, had frequently attracted their notice, and created a powerful wish for its possession. At length, after many ineffectual attempts for the purpose, the owner (whose affairs had become suddenly deranged by too constant an attendance on the vigils at the gaming table), was prevailed upon to part with it, in consequence of that circumstance, and an offered price far exceeding his most sanguine expectations.

The situation of this place was truly romantic, and the surrounding scenery in unison with the taste of its new master. It was, therefore, put in immediate preparation for the reception of him and his family; while orders were, at the same time, given for the repairs necessary at the Abbey, and the small Gothic chapel belonging to the building; the whole of which was intended for the residence of the Lady Abbess and those Nuns who might chuse to accompany her to England. This ancient edifice was enclosed with a high wall, encompassed by a noble forest of trees, whose appearance bespoke them coeval with the ivy-covered turrets, to which they afforded an almost impervious shelter from the bleak winds of a northern

northern sky. It was seated on the side of a gentle acclivity, adjoining the pleasure grounds, through which a winding path led to the gates, along the banks of a little meandering rivulet.

The distance from the mansion-house was trifling, and it seemed in every respect particularly calculated for the purpose to which it was now appropriated.

Scarcely were the requisite alterations completed, and the establishment of the Count de St. Cyprian formed on his own domain, before the future inhabitants of the Abbey made their appearance, escorted by the old *maître d'hôtel*, with several other emigrants; and, on the following week, a further increase was made to their society, by the arrival of M. de Clermont with his youngest daughter.

As for Madame, she had, some time previous to their flight, set off, unknown to her husband, on an excursion to the metropolis; where happening imprudently to involve herself in an affair of a political nature, her life fell a sacrifice to her folly, and she expired by the hand of the public executioner.

Mr. Hastings, long attached by principle and inclination to M. de Clermont, insisted upon him and his two daughters taking up their abode under his roof. This request was acceded to, and

Louisa

Louisa left her friend Victorine to rejoin her father and sister.

What remains to be told of this history is briefly as follows.

Before M. de Clermont left France, he attended the remains of M. de Cordet to the grave. This unfortunate parent died of a broken heart, occasioned by the untimely fate of his heroic and lovely daughter, together with his own personal sufferings during the term of imprisonment, from which he was only set at liberty a very short period previous to his final dissolution.

In regard to De la Ville's destiny, it seems, after the death of the elder Marat, he fell under the displeasure of the National Assembly, who conceiving themselves justified in the suspicions entertained of his conduct, from the frequent and known residence of Mademoiselle de Cordet at Narbonne, and the subsequent emigration which had taken place from the Castle, made these circumstances a pretence to seize on his person and property; the latter of which was speedily appropriated to the wants of the times, and the former provided for in the usual laconic method prescribed for the ultimate relief of those in his then predicament. He died on the scaffold; and, like his illustrious predecessor, the
old

old Count de Narbonne, returned, unregretted, to the original dust from whence he had been formed by the fiat of his Creator.

What became of St. Cyprian's reputed father was never ascertained, neither did any further intelligence transpire relative to the mysterious fate of Madame de Mercour; who probably came to a premature end, during some of the dreadful commotions in the metropolis.

Relieved at last from the terror and difficulties experienced on the first dissolution of the Order, the Nuns soon became reconciled to their new situation, and grateful to Providence for the protection its roof afforded them; while in the friendship of Madame de Narbonne, and the uniform attention of her family, the good Lady Abbess continues to enjoy every satisfaction the worthy and the virtuous mind is capable of feeling on this side eternity. Soon after Victorine's removal to her own house, Madame de Montcalm took up her residence with the holy Community, where she found several emigrants, who preferred boarding with the Sisterhood to any other mode of living; and who, forming in themselves an agreeable society, felt no inclination to look beyond the limits of St. Cyprian's domain for an increase of happiness. Agnes, the former attendant on Victorine, was, at her own particular

particular request, retained in the same capacity, and no longer considered in the character of a lay-sister by her late Superior. Her parents, the faithful Bertram and Margaretta, were fixed in a small but convenient house, purposely erected for their future habitation, much on the same plan with the one they had quitted at Narbonne, and placed in a situation as nearly similar as circumstances would admit. A handsome pension was settled upon them, and Bertram appointed to act as steward on his young Lord's estate—an office which he executes entirely to the satisfaction of his employers, who take every opportunity of evincing the continuance of their attachment to this old and perfectly happy couple.

Upon his arrival in Cumberland, the venerable *maître d'hôtel* immediately resumed his usual station in the family; and though possessed of a competent share of wealth for a state of independence, perseveres in the resolution of dying, as he has lived, in the House of Narbonne.

It was not merely in the construction of Bertram's residence that the Countess shewed a predilection for local circumstances; the repairs in the chapel of the Abbey had likewise been conducted in the same spirit of tender recollection, and made to bear as strong a resemblance as possible to the ever-regretted one at the rock. Monuments to the
memory

memory of St. Hypolite, Madame de Mercour, and Charlotte were here erected, adorned with every impressive and appropriate emblem of characteristic worth. The first of the three was exactly formed on the model of the original one in France; and like it too, is frequently deluged with the tears of heartfelt remembrance and unshaken affection. Some portion of every day is commonly spent in this sacred spot, and the luxury of silent grief frequently indulged, unattended by the terror of those apprehended interruptions which had generally agitated her bosom during every peregrination to the Rock of Narbonne. That grief, however, is gradually softening into the milder sentiment of chastened resignation; and the images of the past recalled rather as a stimulus to present gratitude, than encouraged as motives of complaint against the immutable dispensations of Providence. Happy in the filial attention, the virtues, and prosperity of her incomparable son and his amiable Countess, and in the full enjoyment of every remaining felicity, Madame de Narbonne at length experiences a respite from acute sorrow, and that compensation for years of suffering (entailed upon the children of mortality as an expiation for weakly yielding to the frailties of nature), that the virtuous and the good are sooner or later permitted to taste in proportion
to

to the degree of patience, fortitude, and contrition with which they have afterwards borne the consequences of their own folly.

In forming our estimate of human misery, we are too apt to reason from effects, and overlook causes. Were the latter more duly attended to, interior conviction would teach us that, in every instance where conscience exerts the smallest influence, we may be assured the source of the evil complained of originates from some previous error or mistake in our own conduct. Thus we see the impenetrable, the stern, and unnatural disposition possessed by the old Count de Narbonne was not calculated to set his family an amiable example of the moral duties, or to ensure the success of his wishes by the means adopted for that purpose. On the contrary, disappointment proved the consequence of a dereliction from the feelings of parental affection, and perseverance in a system of unjustifiable hatred; two circumstances which, even in the plenitude of their prosecution, imbibited his daily existence, and involved his unhappy daughter in a series of deception and wretchedness, while it *apparently* defeated the very intention of prolonging the honours of his illustrious

illustrious House, on which the chief gratification of his life seemed principally to depend.—At the same time that daughter was, in her turn, the victim of errors, venial in their nature, perhaps, when her situation is considered, but still of a censurable description, inasmuch as she permitted herself to be led into the practice of dissimulation, and a neglect of her filial rank in society, by contracting a solemn engagement, unfashioned by that authority pre-ordained to direct the choice of youth and inexperience. For though a parent has certainly no right to sacrifice the happiness of his offspring at the shrine of ambition or avarice, neither is a child entitled to act as a free agent, by disposing of herself without his approving consent; and it appears, from the sufferings such a mode of conduct drew upon Adelaide de Narbonne, that every gradation of intentional error, however excusable in some instances, is always destined to receive its share of correction, equally with offences of a more dangerous tendency: but it is just that deviations from moral rectitude should invariably prove their own punishment.

In the case of the beautiful and unfortunate Charlotte de Cordet, it is evident that, though instigated to the deed she committed by the purest, the most benevolent, and most patriotic motives which could

actuate the human breast, yet the practical part of immutable justice is not allowed to the arm of a single individual, whose private passions and prejudices, in that event, would unavoidably lead to innumerable evils in the execution of the laws, and prove ultimately inimical to personal safety, and subversive of all order whatever in civilized society. No degree of acknowledged evil ought, therefore, to be tolerated, even though occasional good may sometimes happen to result from it.

Though the vicissitudes of life are common to all, and misfortune, in one shape or other, equally the portion of every rank or description of mankind, yet the mental sufferings of the virtuous and the bad, however similar in adventitious circumstances, or the superficial opinion of the world, are, in fact, widely different to the feelings of their individual victims; for though the stroke of the executioner may alike fall upon both, it is only the decisive fiat of the self-condemning or acquitting mind that can determine their future destiny. Thus the punishment of De Verney and the two Marats may probably, at a first view, seem inadequate to the enormity of their crimes; but we must not infer from thence that such is really the case, since, however finally sudden, and unaccompanied by the torturing pangs of procrastinated suspense, conscience, that inward monitor

monitor which never dies, had too long and too severely exerted its avenging power in their sanguinary bosoms, to leave much at last for the ministers of Justice to perform. The sensations of terror, of horror, and unceasing remorse, that sternly wring the trembling hearts of the vicious even in their most prosperous moments, far exceed any other that the retributive hand of man can possibly inflict. Let us, therefore, hold fast our integrity, as the first of moral blessings; and always remember that *perseverance in error and intentional guilt* is alone capable of rendering the human mind completely unhappy;—for

NONE BUT THE TRULY WICKED CAN EVER
BE TRULY MISERABLE!!!



F I N I S.

